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From critics to casualties: The National Farmers Union and United States foreign policy, 1945-1953

Bruce Edward Field

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**From critics to casualties: The National Farmers Union and
U.S. foreign policy, 1945–1953**

Field, Bruce Edward, Ph.D.

The College of William and Mary, 1994

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**FROM CRITICS TO CASUALTIES:
THE NATIONAL FARMERS UNION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, 1945-1953**

A Dissertation

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia**

In Partial Fulfillment

**Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

by

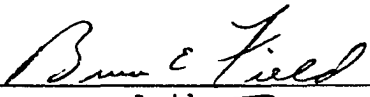
Bruce E. Field

1994

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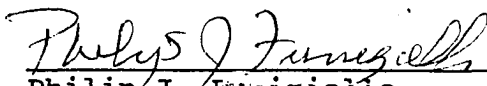


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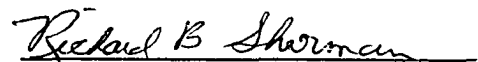
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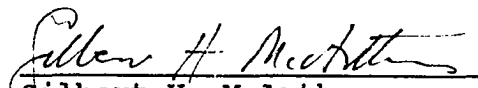
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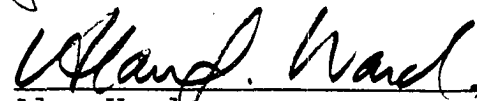
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**For Dad,
whose life taught me about respect**

and

**For Steve Levin,
whose generosity is still teaching me about friendship**

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Foreword

Twenty-five years ago, in his The Roots of the Modern American Empire, William Appleman Williams wrote of the late 19th-century American farmer whose "export-dominated relationship with the world marketplace led him to develop and advocate a vigorously assertive and expansionist foreign policy, or to support such a policy formulated by others." While Williams devoted years of research to this monumental discussion of agrarian support for American expansionism, he expressed a sense of regret that the nation's farm population all-too infrequently opposed American empire. Williams, in fact, wrote enthusiastically of periods of time when American farmers reacted "against various efforts by the United States to reform, remake, or control large portions of the globe." These "delightful moments of history," as Williams described them, included the decade before World War I, the twenty years between the world wars, and the opposition of some Iowa farmers to American intervention in Korea in the 1950's.¹

Williams' reference to Iowa farmers and the Korean War led me to the

¹William Appleman Williams, The Roots of the Modern American Empire: A Study of the Growth and Shaping of Social Consciousness in a Marketplace Society (New York: Random House, Inc., 1969), pp. xxiii-xxiv.

Iowa Farmers Union and to its parent organization, the National Farmers Union, and served as the starting point for this dissertation. That beginning was followed by a year of travel across the United States that produced, in this final form, the story of an agrarian group that, in the first five years following the end of World War II, fit well Williams' image of a "delightful moment of history." Unlike the two larger agricultural organizations of the time period, the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Grange, the Farmers Union devoted little energy toward arguing for expanded foreign markets for agricultural products and even less time toward appeals for protective tariffs. Instead, Farmers Union policy statements, congressional testimony, and verbal and written commentary berated the Truman administration for its advancement of American imperialism and for its denial of the rights of other nations to seek their own courses of action in world affairs. From the national organization, headquartered in both Washington, D.C. and in Denver, Colorado, to the dozens of regional, state, and local affiliates ranging from coast to coast, the membership of the Farmers Union adopted a consistent anti-imperialist approach to world affairs. This included a rejection of what the organization perceived as the inaccurate and potentially damaging view that Soviet Communism

represented the world's major threat to peace.

While some of the state organizations flirted with isolationism, the national headquarters and the majority of the affiliates embraced their foreign policy stands with a profound enthusiasm for international cooperation. Believing strongly in the possibility for world peace inherent in the newly-created United Nations, the National Farmers Union opposed unilateral American policies that it believed negated United Nations initiatives, reversed the internationalism of Franklin Roosevelt, and often were predicated upon contrived situations designed to promote an American agenda. After a brief honeymoon of support for President Truman in which it defended the postwar loan to Great Britain and silently acquiesced in Winston Churchill's "iron curtain" speech, the Farmers Union joined the small but vocal ranks of Cold War critics in rejecting as dangerous and misguided policies the Baruch Plan for atomic energy, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, N.A.T.O., and administration calls for universal military training and a peacetime draft. With the exception of the Point Four program, to which it gave its qualified support, the Farmers Union rejected the Truman administration's vision for what Henry Luce termed an American Century.

In addition to its ideological opposition, the Farmers Union also criticized President Truman's early Cold War foreign policy for contributing to the declining status of the family farmer, the segment of America's agrarian population that was the backbone of the National Farmers Union. Demonstrating what Ronald Steel recently described as the tendency of Americans "to look upon foreign policy as a distraction from the real threats that face the U.S.,² the Farmers Union claimed that Truman's near obsession with containing Communism abroad led to the continuation of an economic program promoting "artificial scarcity" at home. Small farmers, unable to compete with agribusinesses even in the best of times, were pushed farther behind in their quest for economic equality by a foreign policy that, by favoring large business penetration of foreign lands, reinforced the status quo. Government-sponsored programs designed, like the Brannan Plan, to give small farmers a greater share of the nation's economic pie, were lost in the shuffle as the administration enlisted corporate agriculture in the fight to contain Communism.

In the unforgiving temper of the times, Farmers Union opposition to the nation's foreign policy generated suspicions of the organization's loyalty to

²Ronald Steel, "Losing an Empire, Finding a Role," New Perspectives Quarterly IX (Summer, 1992), p. 19.

the United States. Charges of Communist sympathies were leveled at the Farmers Union from the nation's press, from the American Legion, from the rival Farm Bureau, and even from conservative elements within the Union itself. The F.B.I., the State Department, and the House Un-American Activities Committee initiated investigations of the Union, and, in the most publicized attack, New Hampshire's Styles Bridges harangued the Union for two hours from the floor of the U.S. Senate. None of the charges were based on substantiated fact, but focused instead on the fantasy, innuendo, and guilt by association typical of the times. Pathetic attempts to embarrass or isolate the Farmers Union, the attacks nevertheless succeeded in creating internal rifts between those who held fast to the Farmers Union criticism of America's Cold War policy and those who saw a need for organizational change. Outwardly, however, the charges failed to suppress the Union's public position of dissent from American foreign policy.

Then came the Korean War. The sending of American troops to Asia added to the "expensive uncertainty" of agrarian life in the United States, impacting particularly on family farms. The war drained farmers off the land and into both military service and jobs in war-generated industrial plants. Fighting against a Selective Service System seemingly incapable of

appreciating the plight of family farmers, and facing as well a decline in administration-sponsored programs for agriculture, a number of Farmers Union affiliates vocally criticized U.S. involvement in Korea as contributing to the accelerated decline of the nation's small farms. The Iowa Farmers Union in particular opposed America's "police action" in Korea, not only for its negative impact on small farmers but also for its advancement of corporate profits. Led by president Fred Stover, the Iowa affiliate adopted the view of the conflict offered in I.F. Stone's The Hidden History of the Korean War, cursing the Truman administration's use of the Communist demon to fan the flames of war for economic profit.

The national leadership of the Farmers Union, led by president Jim Patton, disagreed with Stover. Weary from the weight of criticism directed at the Union and fearful that failure to support American troops dying in Korea would only increase the attacks and cripple the Union's effectiveness, Patton orchestrated a policy shift that placed the National Farmers Union squarely in the Truman administration camp. Earlier critiques of American "imperialism" were replaced by calls for increased military spending and by apocalyptic descriptions of a world in need of America's righteous might to defeat the evil menace of the Soviet Union. The shift in policy allowed no

room for vocal dissent, and so Patton and the national leadership worked diligently to purge from the Farmers Union individuals like Fred Stover whose continued criticism of America's Cold War policies served as a source of embarrassment to the Union.

Jim Patton denied that his actions during the Korean War represented a shift in organization policy. He argued instead that support for United Nations action in Korea was part of the Farmers Union's belief in the efficacy of the U.N. Had he confined his support of the war to pronouncements lauding the United Nations, his denial of an organizational shift would be more believable. As it was, his adoption of Cold War platitudes and his deep involvement in the purging of organizational heretics provided clear evidence that Jim Patton and the national leadership of the Farmers Union radically altered the foreign policy position of the organization in the wake of the Korean War. In the process, they made casualties of critics like Fred Stover but, by abandoning their principles and succumbing to the pressures of the times, they also made a casualty of the Farmers Union itself.

This study is not intended as an evaluation of the accuracy of the Farmers Union critique of American policy, nor is it designed to offer a

conceptually sophisticated analysis of the complexities and nuances involved in the making of that policy. It makes no pretense of assessing, for example, whether or not Harry Truman, as the Farmers Union claimed, reversed Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy objectives. Nor does it offer anywhere near a complete analysis of the Farmers Union claim that in the time period under study an "unholy alliance" deliberately conspired against America's family farmers. Finally, although acknowledging that the Farmers Union critique of Harry Truman often overlooked the larger context of issues involved in policymaking, this study stops short of examining those issues.

The intent of this dissertation is to describe the foreign policy stand of the National Farmers Union in the early years of the Cold War and to offer an explanation of how and why that stand changed with the coming of the Korean War. In discussing the domestic implications of American foreign policy, it attempts to contribute not only to what Hong-Kyu Park described as the "least discussed side of the Korean conflict,"³ but also to the greater issue of the potency of the Cold War as a factor in American life.

Researching the National Farmers Union was a lengthy but enjoyable process that took me to libraries in twelve states, introduced me to a

³Hong-Kyu Park, "American Involvement in the Korean War," History Teacher XVI (February, 1983), p. 258.

wealth of materials that when I began this project I had no idea existed, and allowed me to meet and correspond with a group of people who are among the most friendly and helpful individuals I have ever been fortunate enough to know. Without intending to slight anyone, I would be remiss if I did not thank specifically Cassandra Volpe of the University of Colorado's Western Historical Collection, who allowed me unlimited access to the papers of both the National Farmers Union and of Jim Patton, and Bob McCown, head of the Special Collections and Manuscripts Division of the University of Iowa Libraries. Bob was by far the most generous of the many kind individuals I met in my travels, allowing me the historian's dream of spending as much time as I wanted poring over the as-yet unprocessed papers of Fred Stover. I also would be negligent if I did not mention the cooperative spirit with which I was greeted by all members of the Farmers Union, including Patton supporters Kenny Schuman and Milt Hake1, as well as Stover advocates Merle Hansen, Betty Lownes, and Homer Ayres. I was particularly grateful for the opportunity to correspond with Homer Ayres before his death in June, 1992.

My acknowledgements also would be terribly incomplete without a tremendous expression of appreciation for Ed Crapol, who, while directing

my research, became more than a guide. In the spirit of his mentor, William Appleman Williams, Ed became both my intellectual yardstick and my personal friend. I can never thank him enough.

Finally, there are the people in my life who deserve my greatest thanks. My wife, Kim, and my daughter, Chelsea, put up with a lot of unnecessary grief in the last five years, grief caused in part by the nature of research but by the nature, as well, of my own addictions. I love them both very much, and I appreciate their understanding.

ABSTRACT

This study chronicles the change in the foreign policy views of the National Farmers Union brought about by U.S. involvement in the Korean War. Abandoning its poignant criticisms of President Truman's earlier Cold War initiatives, the nation's foremost liberal agrarian organization embraced not only American actions in Korea but on a larger scale administration attempts to further what Henry Luce termed the "American Century." This policy reversal created a rift between the national organization and various state and regional branches. The Iowa and Northeastern divisions in particular objected to the shift as a surrender of principle and as a capitulation to the corporate-military domination of American society that threatened the already declining status of the family farmer. These wayward affiliates became Cold War casualties when the Farmers Union revoked their charters for their failure to endorse American activities in Korea. Yet, the national organization's complete about-face on American foreign policy made it, too, a casualty of the Cold War.

This study is based on a wide variety of governmental and private sources, including the newly deposited papers of Iowa Farmers Union president Fred W. Stover. It argues that America's "preponderance of power" following the Second World War led not only to a spreading of the American dream abroad but also to a remolding of political and economic relations on the homefront. The early post-war period became, in the words of President Truman, "the years when the cold war began to overshadow our lives." American priorities gave precedence to increased military budgets, which consumed non-defense related spending and strengthened ties between the military and corporations eager to play a role in shaping the world in the American image. Organizations such as the Farmers Union initially rejected these goals as antithetical to American tradition and as damaging to their own desires for equity within American society. Political and social pressures, however, brought about an eventual acquiescence in the new American priorities and repudiation for groups and individuals unwilling to accept the Cold War as a way of life.

FROM CRITICS TO CASUALTIES:
THE NATIONAL FARMERS UNION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, 1945-1953

Chapter One

The Voices of Agriculture

Addressing the 31st annual meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation in December, 1949, former Secretary of Agriculture Clinton Anderson chose as his theme the question, "Who Shall Speak for Farmers?" The Democratic senator from New Mexico told his Chicago audience that the topic had come to mind when some of his fellow congressmen had dismissed farm organizations as representing neither farmers nor the various citizens of the states. "They don't represent the farmers," one congressman reportedly told Anderson. "I represent the people of my state. They elected me to do that job, and I'm not going to let some fellow who works for a farm organization tell me what to do."¹ In his comments to the Farm Bureau, Anderson rejected this shortsighted view of American politics and argued instead that farm organizations were indeed capable of speaking for the nation's farmers. Considering his audience, the pronouncement was no surprise.

¹Address of the Honorable Clinton P. Anderson, December 14, 1949, Box 4, Folder "American Farm Bureau Federation," Gardner Jackson Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

What Anderson failed to address was which farm organization best represented the interests of America's agrarian population. In the decade following World War II, dozens of groups and hundreds of publications claimed to speak for America's farmers, creating what one observer described as "a babble of voices."² While most of the organizations refrained from declaring themselves the sole representative of American agriculture, they nevertheless criticized their rivals for their inadequacies in representing even a segment of the agrarian community. The result was an ongoing, acrimonious debate that Senator Anderson wisely side-stepped by declaring that he was "less concerned" about which particular group a farmer chose to join than he was that the individual "participate actively" in the group of his choice.

The truth of the matter, as Anderson seemed to understand, was that no organization could accurately represent all of American agriculture. The interests of farmers producing primarily for domestic consumption were

²National Farmers Union president James G. Patton, quoted in Robert L. Tontz, "Memberships of General Farmers' Organizations, United States, 1874-1960," Agricultural History XXXVIII (July, 1964), p. 153. Fortune magazine farm columnist Ladd Haystead quantified the diversity of the farm press with his report that it consisted of over 400 publications. (Ladd Haystead, "4th Semi-Annual Agricultural Report for the Committee on Agriculture, American Petroleum Institute," May 1, 1951, Santa Fe, New Mexico, p. 8, Reel #1, Michael V. DiSalle Papers, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.)

different from the ones expressed by those whose products were aimed mainly at foreign markets. Southern farmers differed in their needs from their midwestern counterparts, and similar divisions existed between older, debt-free farmers and their younger debt-ridden colleagues. In the same manner, farmers fortunate enough to be operating on newer lands were unlikely to be interested in the same concerns held by those whose farmlands were worn out from decades, if not centuries, of use. Any organization claiming to speak for all of these diversified interests would be, as National Farmers Union president Jim Patton honestly admitted in 1952, "taking in too much territory."³

The distrust of American farmers toward formal institutions made the task of organizing the agricultural community even more formidable. Typical were the comments of two Wisconsin farmers polled in 1950 about their preferences among the leading farm groups. "All these organizations are after," one Crawford County farmer suggested, "is our money. When they get it they go into business for themselves." A Manitowoc dairyman added that, "Farm organizations are doing nothing but arguing among themselves." Expressing a similar viewpoint, a North Dakota farmer observed that, "You'll

³Quoted in Karl D. Butler, "Who Shall Speak for Farmers?" Successful Farming L (November, 1952), p. 163.

never get the real reactions of the farmer from the farm organization leaders" since they each had "their own axes to grind."⁴

This combination of skepticism and diversified interests limited farmer participation in agrarian organizations. The estimate offered by one farm paper of the time was that only 30% of America's 5.4 million farmers carried memberships in any of the major farm groups.⁵ While this particular figure perhaps underestimated the extent to which the nation's farmers joined in lobbying activities, it was an accurate reflection of the general apathy of a large segment of the agrarian community. Perhaps not unlike the attitudes exhibited by American voters as a whole, many of the nation's farmers viewed participation in the political process as a waste of their valuable time. They trusted that the world would successfully go 'round without them making any uncomfortable commitments.

Those farmers who participated in the political process were attracted primarily to three agrarian organizations that, contrary to the naysaying skeptics, were capable of influencing national policy. These three groups, the Grange, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the National Farmers

⁴Wisconsin Agriculturalist and Farmer, August 19, 1950, p. 17; Gerald Brekke to Gabriel Hauge, January 27, 1953, Box 1, Folder "Charles F. Willis, Assistant to the Assistant to the President," Records of Gabriel Hauge, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

⁵H.K. Tharin, "Are Farmers Really Organized?" Farm Front, May, 1945, pp. 3-4.

Union, in truth represented a little over half of the nation's farmers. The broad scope of their memberships meant that while they occasionally agreed upon those programs that best served America's agricultural population, they more often did not.

This was particularly true of their positions on America's role in the new world order of the Cold War. Emphasizing what historian Melvyn Leffler has recently described as the nation's "preponderance of power,"⁶ the Grange insisted on the right of the United States unilaterally to pursue its ideological and economic goals. What the organization saw as the specific objectives of U.S. foreign policy, however, was often lost in their near-jingoistic declarations of American exceptionalism. For the Farm Bureau, which agreed with the Grange on the uniquely powerful position of the United States, there was no confusion as to what the nation should pursue. American efforts should focus specifically, the Bureau argued, on the expansion of overseas markets. Continuing what William Appleman Williams identified as 19th-century agrarian support for "a militantly expansionist foreign policy,"⁷ the Bureau in particular called for expanded

⁶Melvyn P. Leffler, A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992).

⁷Williams, The Roots of the Modern American Empire, p. xxiii.

markets for American agriculture.

While they differed in emphasis, both the Grange and the Farm Bureau accepted the argument of the Truman administration that Communist expansion was the main deterrent to the attainment of America's goals. They therefore supported the anti-Communist rhetoric of the era and actively lobbied for the establishment of an American Century beneficial to the United States and to the rest of the world as well. The Farmers Union, however, rejected this belief in the salutary effects of such a quest. The organization stressed more emphatically than the other two groups the immutable linkage between foreign and domestic policies and believed that the flexing of American power abroad would have serious repercussions at home. The Farmers Union therefore cautioned against an over-zealous and self-centered Cold War mentality as disastrous both to the American farmer and to the broad spectrum of American society. Its position made the Farmers Union the sole agrarian representative in the small but vocal circle of Cold War critics.

The National Grange, the oldest of America's three major agrarian groups, had itself once played the role of critic. First organized in 1867 as a leading advocate for agrarian discontent with the legendary "robber barons" of the railroad industry, the early Grange had demanded active

government intervention as an important step in stemming the tide of corporate domination of American life. It had even taken the startlingly progressive step of admitting women to membership on an equal basis with men.⁸

By the late 1940's, however, the Grange bore little resemblance to the reforming organization of an earlier day. Described by various observers as pragmatic, conservative, fraternal, and friendly, the Grange in these early years of the Cold War, as agrarian expert Wesley McCune argued, "move[d] cautiously and triel[d] to avoid offense of anyone."⁹ Representing what the State Department labelled a "pie supper membership"¹⁰ of 800,000, located

⁸The early history of the Grange, as well as the Farm Bureau and Farmers Union, can be found in a variety of sources, including Lowell Dyson, Farmers' Organizations (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Wesley McCune, Who's Behind Our Farm Policy? (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1956); Walter W. Wilcox, Social Responsibility in Farm Leadership: An Analysis of Farm Problems and Farm Leadership in Action (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975); and Tontz, "Memberships," pp. 143-156.

⁹McCune, Farm Policy, p. 43. In addition to McCune's description, others citing the conservative nature of the Grange included: Tharin, "Are Farmers Really Organized?," p. 3; Tontz, "Memberships," p. 144; R.B. Held, "Our Farm Organizations . . . How They Started; Their Stand Today," Farm Policy Forum III (November, 1950), p. 10; Ross B. Talbot and Don F. Hadwiger, The Policy Process in American Agriculture (San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Company, 1968), p. 118; and Department of State, Office of Public Opinion Studies, "Current Attitudes of Farmer Organizations Toward International Relations," February 22, 1945, p. 1, Box 19, Record Group 59, National Archives.

¹⁰Department of State, "Current Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," February 22, 1945, p. 1.

mainly in Ohio and the Northeast, the once proud champion of reform delighted in its reputation for fairness and prided itself on liquor and tobacco-free meetings where both the Bible and the American flag were prominently displayed.¹¹ When venturing away from what one of its leading officials called a main focus on "the social and educational development of rural life" and into the less familiar territory of "legislative or financial accomplishments,"¹² the Grange exhibited an astonishing reversal of its earlier positions. It openly criticized government intervention in the economic life of the nation, opposed the reform-seeking efforts of organized labor, and, most surprisingly, established remarkably close ties with American corporations that on occasion led to protests of government regulation of business.

The shift away from advocating an activist government was evident in National Grange master Herschel Newsom's claim that his election to the organization's highest office in November of 1950 was because of his opposition to "excessive governmental control of farm products and our daily lives."¹³ Discussing amendments to the Defense Production Act

¹¹Butler, "Who Shall Speak," p. 37; McCune, Farm Policy, p. 34.

¹²Charles M. Gardner quoted in Wilcox, Social Responsibility, pp. 99-100.

¹³"How We Can Stop Rising Prices (A Discussion with Michael V. DiSalle, Walter Reuther, and Herschel Newsom)," in Harold F. Harding, editor,

before the Senate Committee on Banking and Currency in 1952, Newsom spoke of his organization's apprehension toward a government "regimentation" that he feared might result in farmers being told "what [they] shall raise and where [they] shall raise it."¹⁴ Other Grange supporters and officials reinforced this position in their statements opposing government-imposed price controls. Fred Bailey of Agricultural Research Incorporated, a Grange subsidiary, argued that, "Government gifts and price supports are not and cannot be the answer" to the "perennial and persistent farm problem" of the nation. Roy Battles, a former farm director for a Cincinnati radio station who had been brought by Newsom to Washington as his assistant, put it more bluntly than most. He objected, he wrote in a memo on the subject of "low-income farmers," to government "welfare . . . that subsidizes people into a higher standard of living than they are entitled to. . . ."¹⁵

Such statements create a healthy amount of skepticism concerning the The Age of Danger: Major Speeches in American Problems (New York: Random House, 1952), p. 289.

¹⁴Testimony of Herschel Newsom, March 11, 1952, U.S. Congress, Senate, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, Defense Production Act Amendments of 1952: Hearings Before the Committee on Banking and Currency, p. 380.

¹⁵"Are There Too Many Farmers?" National County Agent and Vo-Ag Teacher VI (July, 1950), p. 7; Roy Battles to Lloyd C. Halvorson, July 8, 1954, Box 19, Folder 13a, National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry Records, 1842-1982, Collection #3020, Cornell University Library.

Grange's supposed empathy for many of the nation's more impoverished farmers. So, too, does the organization's 1950 observation that those farmers not producing for a commercial market were best dealt with as a "social problem,"¹⁶ a view that Battles once again colorfully elaborated upon in describing low-income farmers in his home state of Minnesota.

They could often be found, he wrote:

chasing out to dances with their five kids two or three times a week, some were partially alcoholics, some would leave overshoes lie out in the yard all summer long, and in general let what they had go to rot, some could not be trusted, some had bad health, some had no regard for education, some were plain lazy or lacked motivation, some were spendthrifts, some were neurotics. . . .¹⁷

When pressed on the question of what to do about the nation's poorest farmers, Battles and other Grange officials occasionally toyed with the concept of "social and welfare planning."¹⁸ Finding that solution generally flawed by the necessity of government involvement, Grange leaders opted instead for encouraging impoverished farmers to move off the land and into industrial employment. In proposing this route, however, the Grange ran into what it felt was the "barrier"¹⁹ of labor unions. Support for the anti-

¹⁶"Are There Too Many Farmers?" p. 28.

¹⁷Battles to Halvorson, July 8, 1954, National Grange Records.

¹⁸Battles to Halvorson, July 8, 1954, National Grange Records.

¹⁹Lloyd C. Halvorson to Agricultural Committee, November 6, 1953, Box 19, Folder 13a, National Grange Records.

union Taft-Hartley legislation of 1947 and the obvious resentment evident in Herschel Newsom's 1952 statements to the Senate concerning the "imbalance" between the purchasing power of labor and agriculture demonstrated once again how far the Grange had drifted from its nineteenth century roots.²⁰

Nothing, however, more clearly showed the changed nature of the Grange than its post-war relationship with American business. Despite its claim to represent the "family-sized farm . . . against the threatened onswEEP of corporation farming,"²¹ the organization adopted policies that unquestionably placed it in the camp of corporate America. The most remarkable example of the many close ties between the Grange and American business was a 1952 suggestion by Herschel Newsom "for a study of the entire transportation picture toward an end of less regulation of railroads."²² This new pro-business attitude also expanded beyond the

²⁰Testimony of Herschel Newsom, March 11, 1952, Defense Production Act Amendments of 1952, pp. 377-378; "A Resume of Agricultural Policy and Program Recommendations Adopted by the National Grange, Eight-Second Annual Session at Portland, Maine, November 10-19, 1948," Fred Stover Papers, University of Iowa. The Stover Papers sit in the same eighty-plus cardboard boxes that were originally taken out of Stover's home following his death. Since they are unprocessed, there are no identifying box or folder numbers in this or subsequent footnotes.

²¹Agricultural Extension Service, Iowa State College, "An Introduction to Farmers' Organizations," January 1, 1950, p. 3, Stover Papers.

²²McCune, Farm Policy, pp. 37-43.

nation's shores to include support for an active role by American businessmen overseas. The Grange's 1951 convention, the State Department's Office of Public Opinion Studies observed, "asserted that the only sound way for underdeveloped countries to get the capital necessary for substantial modern production [was] to provide a favorable climate for private investment by American businessmen."²³

Grange support for American business expansion went hand-in-hand with the organization's insistence that a top priority for the American farmer was "to regain and expand his foreign market." While better diets at home, further research and education, and improved marketing techniques were all supported as "long-range projects which help only over a period of years," the immediate development of foreign outlets was considered the most profitable program for American agriculture.²⁴

While encouraging farmers to seek foreign markets, the Grange also supported a re-evaluation of existing tariff and reciprocal trade policies and the imposition of a two-price system for American crops dependent on an export market. Albert Goss, the National Grange master whose death in

²³Department of State, Office of Public Opinion Studies, "Attitudes of Farmer Organizations Toward International Issues, 1951-1952," July 17, 1952, p. 4, Box 19, Record Group 59, National Archives.

²⁴Roy Battles cover letter for "Fact Sheet of Grange Viewpoints," March 16, 1953, Stover Papers.

late 1950 opened the door for Herschel Newsom's rise to power, occasionally advocated outright protective tariffs, and the Grange leadership at times recommended modifications in the reciprocal trade agreements program to limit the President's ability to reduce tariffs.²⁵ But the organization's primary complaint with American trade policies was that they seemed once again to promote the imbalance between the agricultural and manufacturing communities. "Why is it," Newsom asked in his annual address of 1952, "that raw products of agriculture come in duty free whereas, just the minute that any processing occurs . . . it immediately invites a rather imposing tariff or protective mechanism?" "it is high time," Newsom announced, "to put an end to such grossly unjust trading policies [that] penalized [farmers] in favor of the non-agricultural workers of this land. . . ."²⁶ The cornerstone of what the Grange felt was a more equitable approach was a two-price system in which parity prices were required for that portion of the crop sold in the home market, with the remaining amount being exported for free market world prices. Such a program, the Grange believed, would allow "farmers to sell cheaper abroad

²⁵Department of State, "Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," January 24, 1951, pp. 2 and 11.

²⁶"Address of Worthy Master," 1952, in National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry, Journals of the Proceedings of the 84th-87th Annual Sessions (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1950-1953), pp. 9-10.

without breaking the domestic market."²⁷

In addition to being "a good business investment" and "a means of raising the American standard of living," the pursuit of world markets was also characterized by the Grange as "an instrument of world peace." More specifically, in the Cold War fervor of the late 1940's and early 1950's, the cultivation of export markets was seen as a viable weapon in the fight against Communism. Western European nations, Grange officials argued, "can produce hand and machine made industrial commodities far more efficiently than they can produce agricultural products They must, therefore, buy from the two great major food exporting areas--namely, the United States and Canada, or from the area controlled by Russia." To avoid "strengthen[ing] the Kremlin both economically and politically," and to prevent the spread of "a disease that spawns communism," it was important for the United States to corner the agricultural markets of Europe.²⁸

With the exception of legislative counsel J.T. Sanders' inexplicable 1948

²⁷"Fact Sheet of Grange Viewpoints," p. 3. Other brief explanations of the two-price system can be found in: "National Master's Address," October 25, 1950, in Journals of Proceedings, p. 18; McCune, Farm Policy, p. 36; and Wilcox, Social Responsibility, pp. 100-101.

²⁸"Fact Sheet of Grange Viewpoints," p. 1. The view of Communism as a disease, "a metaphorical virus that threatened to infect the world," has recently been examined in Geoffrey S. Smith, "National Security and Personal Isolation: Sex, Gender, and Disease in the Cold-War United States," The International History Review XIV (May, 1992), pp. 307-337.

warning that the United States "should not make the mistake of thinking that the European recovery program is primarily a means of combating communism or of promoting our own type of democracy," Grange officials consistently adopted the Cold War rhetoric of anti-Communism.²⁹ The "insidious doctrine" and its "atheism and cruel materialism" were repeatedly denounced, as were the Communist goals of "rul[ing] the world," of "communiz[ing] all [of] Europe and destroy[ing] the very freedom for which we had fought" in the Second World War.³⁰ Critical of the American government for following a "coddling policy" that included the "tragic agreement at Yalta," the Grange insisted that the United States must not fail to protect itself against Soviet aggression on the military, economic, and moral fronts.³¹ Its exhortation to "meet force with even greater force" led the Grange occasionally to waver in its opposition to universal military

²⁹Testimony of J.T. Sanders, January 30, 1948, U.S. Congress, Senate, 80th Congress, 2nd Session, European Recovery Program: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, pp. 1121-1122.

³⁰"Address of Albert S. Goss, Master, Before the 82nd Annual Session of the National Grange, Portland, Maine, November 10, 1948," p. 9, Stover Papers; "Resume of Agricultural Policy," p. 16; The Grange News, September 2, 1950, p. 1. Other examples of anti-Communist rhetoric can be found in the Journals of Proceedings for 1950-1952.

³¹Department of State, Office of Public Opinion Studies, "Opinions and Activities of American Private Organizations and Groups," September 18, 1950, p. 1, Box 16, Record Group 59, National Archives; "National Master's Address," October 25, 1950, in Journals of Proceedings, p. 12.

training, as when Albert Goss uncharacteristically called on "every young man [to] devote a certain portion of his time in the direct service of his nation." In addition, the fear that "propagandists and saboteurs" were attempting to wreck American democracy from within induced the suggestion that such "traitors and spies . . . should be dealt with much more severely than we have been accustomed to deal with ordinary criminals."³²

The struggle against Communism had particular significance, the Grange argued, for farmers, both in the United States and throughout the world. The age old problem of land distribution had allowed Communist proponents to make great strides in impoverished agricultural communities. With a little assistance from the United States, Albert Goss suggested, these underdeveloped nations could remedy their economic woes and simultaneously avoid Communist infiltration by following an American sponsored land redistribution program established "on a much sounder basis than anything Communism has to offer." The idea was to "buy up the land in large holdings and sell to the farmers in small tracts on long term amortized contracts. The owners could be compensated in long time bonds" and then given financial aid "to put the capital thus released from land

³²Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," September 18, 1950, p. 1; "National Master's Address," October 25, 1950, in Journals of Proceedings, p. 13; "Address of Albert S. Goss, November 10, 1948," p. 9.

holdings into industrial development, such as these backward nations need so desperately. . . .³³ What Goss omitted from his argument was that by encouraging foreign nations to shift their energies away from agriculture and toward industrial production, the United States would also be creating the possibility of more overseas markets for American crops.

The anti-Communist rhetoric of Grange officials was accompanied in these years by a self-righteous insistence on the correctness of the American position in world affairs and by a chauvinistic determination that no impediments should hinder U.S. interests. While openly expressing support for the United Nations, the Grange pressed for the American right to pursue its own unilateral agenda. Membership in the U.N., the organization argued, should neither cancel the American right to declare war nor force it to act in a manner contrary to its national interest. In a similar manner, participation in the International Trade Organization could not preclude the privilege of the United States to pursue its own trade policies nor to "revoke any trade agreement within a reasonable length of time after its adoption."³⁴

³³"National Master's Address," October 25, 1950, in Journals of Proceedings, p. 14.

³⁴Department of State, "Current Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," February 22, 1945, pp. 2 and 5; Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," December 19, 1947, pp. 4-5; Department of State, "Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," January 24, 1951, p. 13.

The Grange position was partially motivated by the belief that large nations deserved a greater role in world affairs than their less powerful counterparts. For example, Grange officials favored adjustment of World Bank regulations "to give those who furnish the most capital greater control..." The position also reflected the Grange belief that much of the world had come to expect something for nothing, and that European nations in particular had failed to provide their citizens with sufficient return for their labors to allow them successfully to survive in the competitive world economy. Commenting on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the National Grange Monthly declared, in April, 1949, that what the world needed was not a statement of rights but a more practical Declaration of Human Responsibility. With this perspective in mind, the Grange announced its support of American economic assistance programs only to nations demonstrating a willingness to help themselves. In what was surely a promotion of American self-interest, the organization also demanded that when the United States furnished assistance "proper publicity be given in regard to the source of the aid."³⁵

³⁵Department of State, "Current Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," February 22, 1945, p. 5; Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," April 11, 1949, pp. 1-2, and November 10, 1952, p. 1; Department of State, "Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," January 24, 1951, p. 8.

The largest of the national farm organizations, the American Farm Bureau Federation, shared many of the views of the Grange. Its insistence on nations making their "just contributions" to United Nations programs mirrored the Grange position on national responsibility. Similarly, its announcement that "individual recipients of any aid should be informed that this aid came from the United States" echoed the Grange interest in proper publicity being given to American efforts toward European reconstruction. Farm Bureau support for the Taft-Hartley Act and for right-to-work laws, and the organization's opposition to the raising of the minimum wage likewise put the Farm Bureau in line with the Grange as having what historian Lowell Dyson called an "adversarial attitude toward organized labor."³⁶

What the Farm Bureau did not share with the Grange was a legacy as a proponent of reform. Born in 1919 under the sponsorship of the Binghampton, New York, Chamber of Commerce, the Bureau was "nurtured on funds from industry and . . . never completely left its home and parents."³⁷

³⁶"Resolutions Adopted at the 32nd Annual Convention of the American Farm Bureau Federation, Dallas, Texas, December 14, 1950," p. 7, Box 1 (Agriculture Committee), Folder "American Farm Bureau Federation 1950-1951," Bourke B. Hickenlooper Papers, Herbert Hoover Library, West Branch, Iowa; Testimony of Allan Kline, January 30, 1948, European Recovery Program, pp. 1115-1116; Dyson, Farmers' Organizations, p. 22.

³⁷McCune, Farm Policy, p. 15.

Its 1950 membership of approximately 1.5 million, most of whom resided in the South and Midwest, included a large number of non-farmers, and its policy positions clearly indicated a preference for preservation of large commercial farmers over their less advantaged contemporaries. Mistakenly characterized by one 1950 commentator as "the unpredictable middle"³⁸ of the agrarian organizations, the Farm Bureau in fact was neither middle of the road nor unpredictable. It was perhaps not as callous as the New Republic suggested when it accused the organization of disdainfully dismissing poor farmers as bringing on their own poverty out of sheer laziness. But the 1949 argument of its national president that "a relatively few people [should] produce the necessary food" of the nation was typical of the Bureau's belief that there were too many farmers in America and that those not up to the task of producing for a commercial market should be encouraged to seek employment elsewhere.³⁹

Although it had arrived at its position by a more direct route than that taken by the Grange, the Farm Bureau shared with the older organization a distrust of government intervention in the nation's economy. That government agencies, including the Agriculture Department, should attempt

³⁸R.B. Held, "Our Farm Organizations," p.10.

³⁹Helen Fuller, "Who Speaks for the Farmers," New Republic CVI (February 23, 1942), p. 267; Allan Kline quoted in McCune, Farm Policy, p. 21.

to subvert the "natural" role of farm organizations in the formation of agricultural policy was a particularly vexing situation that the Farm Bureau believed could only result in disaster for the nation's farmers. It would mean, the Farm Bureau argued, "deciding on a political rather than economic basis the production pattern of American agriculture."⁴⁰

Much of the Farm Bureau's anti-government sentiment was a result of its displeasure with what it termed the "socialistic intents and purposes"⁴¹ of New Deal programs such as the Farm Security Administration. Farm Bureau president Edward O'Neal had taken the lead in opposing the F.S.A. in the early 1940's, but it was his successor who made the fight against a "regulated economy" one of the major rallying points for the Bureau's membership. Former Iowa Farm Bureau president Allan Kline, who succeeded O'Neal in 1947, was accurately described in a flattering 1955 biographical sketch as an "evangelist of free enterprise" who openly embraced the nineteenth century liberal creed that "there was no God other than Adam Smith whose

⁴⁰Testimony of Allan Kline, April 18, 1952, U.S. Congress, Senate, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, Farm Price Supports and Production Goals: Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, p. 185. Other examples of the Farm Bureau's anti-government attitude can be found in the American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, August 6, 1951, p. 2, and December 24, 1951, p. 1, and in E. Howard Hill, Talk to Chamber of Commerce Secretaries, January 22, 1951, Box 9, Folder 6, E. Howard Hill Papers, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

⁴¹Orville Merton Kile, The Farm Bureau Through Three Decades (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1948), p. 270.

prophet was John Stuart Mill. . . ."⁴² Under Kline's leadership, the Farm Bureau zealously argued that the avenue for American success lay on the road of unrestrained capitalism and that "governmental paternalism leads to economic stagnation."⁴³

Farm Bureau disapproval of a government-directed agricultural policy led to a public feud between Kline and Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan. The Secretary's family farm review and his Brannan Plan for agriculture, programs that continued and even expanded government involvement in farm planning, were condemned for leading the American farmer toward a status as "a peasant dependent upon the government's largesse."⁴⁴ After appearing with Kline in a "mud-slinging" debate in Des Moines in February of 1950, Secretary Brannan accused the Farm Bureau leader of directing "vicious personal attacks" against both the Department of Agriculture and himself. Kline, who rumor had it was a leading candidate for Secretary of Agriculture had the Republicans won the presidency in 1948, denied the accusations as "truly remarkable."⁴⁵

⁴²Victor L. Albjerg, "Allan Blair Kline: The Farm Bureau, 1955," Current History XXVIII (June, 1955), p. 362.

⁴³Testimony of Allan Kline, April 18, 1952, Farm Price Supports, p. 170.

⁴⁴Hoosier Farmer, September, 1951, p. 7.

⁴⁵"The Controversial Mr. Kline," Iowan I (October-November, 1952), p. 20; American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, March 17, 1952,

When it was not engaging in verbal sparring, the Farm Bureau focused much of its energies in the immediate postwar years on opposing the continuation of government imposed price controls. Although the group had supported such measures as a wartime necessity, with the arrival of peace they were denounced as "an economic narcotic"⁴⁶ and linked with a host of societal ills. Kline told the Senate in 1951 that "continued price controls will lead to a breakdown of respect for the law, and a consequent breakdown in public morality." They would also, he concluded, create an "economic base for the support of a new criminal group" whose livelihood would be established through the inevitable development of black markets.⁴⁷ Writing to Iowa Senator Bourke Hickenlooper in early 1951, Kline placed his argument in a broader perspective with the charge that economic controls had "more in common with totalitarian principles than with the principles

p. 1; Charles Brannan to Allan Kline, September 23, 1950, Box 1, Folder "Kline, Allan D.," Papers of Wesley McCune, Truman Library; Allan Kline to Charles Brannan, September 29, 1950, Box 155, Folder 2, President's Secretary's Files (Subject File: Cabinet, Agriculture), Truman Library. The papers of McCune, Executive Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture, are filled with numerous examples of angry correspondence between Brannan and Kline.

⁴⁶Testimony of Allan Kline, April 18, 1952, Farm Price Supports, p. 199.

⁴⁷Testimony of Allan Kline, May 25, 1951, U.S. Congress, Senate, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, Defense Production Act Amendments of 1951: Hearings Before the Committee on Banking and Currency, p. 1757.

which support our free American system."⁴⁸

The warning against totalitarianism was one aspect of the intense Farm Bureau interest in international affairs. While almost always viewing the world scene from the same perspective as that of the Grange, the Farm Bureau consistently overshadowed the older organization in the intensity and persistence of its argument. As the nation's largest farm organization, with its own Department of International Affairs, the Bureau devoted great amounts of time and print to the state of the world. Multi-part editorials by John C. Lynn and Gwynn Garnett entitled, respectively, "The Struggle for Peace" and "Our Stake in Foreign Affairs" were but two examples of this concern for world events.⁴⁹

Farm Bureau pronouncements on American foreign policy reflected the organization's insistence on joining economic and national security interests. "U.S. foreign policy objectives," the Bureau's annual convention of 1951 announced:

should be to help maintain freedom in the world, to improve the economic well being of nations, to build adequate military defense in cooperation with friendly nations, to expand production and individual opportunity in friendly cooperating nations, and to accomplish these purposes without impairing the stability of the U.S. economy or its

⁴⁸Allan B. Kline to Bourke B. Hickenlooper, January 5, 1951, Box 1 (Agriculture Committee), Folder "American Farm Bureau Federation 1950-1951," Hickenlooper Papers.

⁴⁹American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, October 9-November 20, 1950, and February 19-March 19, 1951.

free institutions.⁵⁰

A history of the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation's first fifty years spoke in the same terms. "The organization has advocated," the group's secretary and treasurer wrote, "intelligent United States involvement in world affairs and acceptance of a responsibility to assist other nations in helping themselves."⁵¹

The Farm Bureau perspective on American foreign policy contained the same elements of activist involvement and anti-Soviet rhetoric evident in the position of the Grange. Rejecting both isolationism and appeasement, the Bureau instead demonstrated a preference for a policy of collective security pursued through the workings of the United Nations. Calling the earlier demise of the League of Nations "one of the great tragedies of our time," the Bureau vowed "that no such failure will come to [the] U.N."⁵² Support for the United Nations, however, was tempered by the suspicion that even as late as 1949 it was not yet strong enough to be completely trusted with the preservation of world peace. As a result, the Bureau stressed the

⁵⁰The Nation's Agriculture XXVII (February, 1952), p. 9.

⁵¹Donald B. Groves and Kenneth Thatcher, The First Fifty: History of the Farm Bureau in Iowa (Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Company, Inc., 1968), p. 227.

⁵²Gordon H. Allen, "Washington Ringside," September 18, 1950, Box 1 (Agriculture Committee), Folder "American Farm Bureau Federation 1950-1951," Hickenlooper Papers.

necessity for regional collective security arrangements and argued that until the U.N. was more equipped to handle such tasks that relief and other programs were best left to the efforts of national governments, particularly the United States, more experienced in the field.⁵³

In addition to being impeded by its youth, the United Nations was also crippled, the Farm Bureau argued, by the uncooperative and self-centered attitude of the Soviet Union. Matching the Grange's anti-Soviet rhetoric, Allan Kline charged that the "completely ruthless . . . materialists and atheists" running the Soviet Union had deliberately blocked U.N. actions in order to further their goal of unilaterally ruling the world.⁵⁴ Using apocalyptic terms eerily resembling the language of NSC-68, President

⁵³A sampling of the Farm Bureau position on the U.N. and collective security would include: Farm Bureau annual resolutions printed in the American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, December 25, 1950, pp. 3-5, and December 24, 1951, pp. 1-3; "Farm Bureau Asks Stronger U.N.," Wallace's Farmer and Iowa Homestead, December 16, 1950, p. 12; "Give Us Chance to Produce," Wallace's Farmer and Iowa Homestead, January 6, 1951, p. 18; Ohio Farm Bureau Advisory Council Guide, VIII (December, 1950), n.p.; Testimony of Allan Kline, February 5, 1948, U.S. Congress, House, 80th Congress, 2nd Session, United States Foreign Policy for a Post-War Recovery Program: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, p. 941; Testimony of Allan Kline, May 6, 1949, U.S. Congress, Senate, 81st Congress, 1st Session, North Atlantic Treaty: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, pp. 575-576; and Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," April 11, 1947, p. 3.

⁵⁴American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, October 9, 1950, p. 1.

Truman's April 1950 in-house reassessment of American foreign policy, Gwynn Garnett spoke of the division "between the free world and the slave." The characterization was repeated in Farm Bureau resolutions in 1950, when the organization proclaimed that there were "two great forces at work in the battle for the minds of men," and again in 1951 with the proclamation that the United States was "one of the few remaining strongholds of free people."⁵⁵ While duplicating the language of NSC-68, Bureau officials also showed their approval for what became known as the domino theory. As part of his "Our Stake in Foreign Affairs" series, Gwynn Garnett in February of 1951 published a table showing what percentage and which specific areas of the world fell into the categories of "Communist dominated," "Communist threatened," "softening up," and "hard-core freedom loving capitalists."⁵⁶ The last group, much to Garnett's displeasure, contained, he said, only ten percent of the world.

Communist expansion made it necessary, John Lynn argued in his November, 1950, editorial, "The Struggle for Peace," for the United States to "send abroad our supplies to help defend democracy." This was particularly true in Asia, he wrote, an area of the world once provided a "measure of

⁵⁵American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, March 19, 1951, p. 2, December 25, 1950, p. 3, and December 24, 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁶American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, February 26, 1951, p. 2.

security" through the beneficial existence of the Imperial System. With that system now "suspended," the newly independent nations of Asia were ripe targets for Communist reminders that western colonial powers had imposed their control on the region not to assist the Asian peoples but to benefit themselves through exploitation. It would take some time, Lynn suggested, but it was crucial that Asia "shift mental gears and see in the west a protector, and in the Soviet Union a threat." The opportunity to begin this process presented itself with the situation in Indochina, where Lynn applauded the decision of the United States to follow through on its promise of furnishing "military equipment and supplies for the French forces" aiding that nation in its struggle with Communism.⁵⁷

While Lynn and other Farm Bureau figures spoke of supporting the "world-wide defense of freedom, democracy, [and] the dignity of man" as some holy crusade against Communist imperialism,⁵⁸ what they were most concerned with was the preservation of a capitalist world order. Following the lead of its "evangelist of free enterprise," Allan Kline, the Farm Bureau

⁵⁷American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, November 13, 1950, p. 2. Indicating either a lack of geographical knowledge or the ascendancy of passion over fact, Lynn mistakenly interchanged "Indochina" and "Indonesia," treating the two as if they were one.

⁵⁸American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, December 25, 1950, p. 3.

extolled the virtues of American capitalism and maintained that, "The United States must demonstrate to the world that a dynamic, expanding, competitive capitalism is the true way to the more abundant life that thoughtful people everywhere are seeking."⁵⁹

For farmers, the Bureau insisted, this dynamic capitalism rested upon the expansion of overseas markets. While the Grange had touted the expansion of foreign markets for American agriculture as a main priority, that organization's most avid spokesmen could not come close in matching the intensity with which Farm Bureau representatives hammered away at the significance of foreign markets for American crops. It was one topic that consistently appeared in Farm Bureau testimony before Congress and in the organization's annual resolutions. And each time the argument appeared, it was phrased in the Cold War terminology that saw the struggle for markets as an adjunct of the capitalist-communist struggle for "the minds of men."

Although in its concern over the fate of Indochina the Farm Bureau had expressed an interest in the future of Asia, it was most concerned with the effect American policies would have on the ability of American farmers to sell their crops in Europe. Discussing American plans for post-war recovery

⁵⁹American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, December 22, 1952, p. 2.

with the House Foreign Affairs Committee in 1948, Allan Kline spoke of "maintaining permanent markets in Europe which would prove very beneficial to American agriculture."⁶⁰ The problem with preserving these markets, Kline and other Farm Bureau officials continually pointed out, was that "unless our foreign aid program is geared to meet the needs of our allies, they'll be forced to turn to Communist dominated countries for the necessities of life."⁶¹

By the early 1950's, the Bureau was convinced that misdirected American policies, specifically the Mutual Security Act, had allowed this disastrous scenario to take shape. Instead of fulfilling Europe's primary need by focusing on exports of foodstuffs, the mutual security program emphasized the shipment of military and industrial goods. Europeans were then forced, Kline told the Senate in 1952, "to supplement their requirements for . . . foods and raw materials by exchanging industrial products and critical materials with iron-curtain countries." Citing British purchases from the Soviet Union of 11 million bushels of corn, 16 million bushels of barley, 2.8 million bushels of oats, and 7.4 million bushels of

⁶⁰Testimony of Allan Kline, February 5, 1948, United States Foreign Policy for a Post-War Recovery Program, p. 943.

⁶¹Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," November 10, 1952, p. 1.

wheat, Kline criticized the mutual security program as having been written "without regard to . . . essential international relations" and as dealing with "mutual security as though it were primarily a military operation. . . ." ⁶² Adding that British purchases of American wheat had dropped from 34 percent of her total in 1951 to 11 percent of her total in 1952, Gwynn Garnett agreed with Kline that continuation of the program would allow the Soviets "to gnaw away at Western European trade and steal the U.S. farm market bit by bit." ⁶³

The Farm Bureau's assessment of America's reciprocal trade policies was more positive. Noting that during the life of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act the value of American agricultural exports had climbed from \$670 million to \$4 billion, the Bureau praised the program for enabling friendly nations to sell their products to the United States and thereby earn dollars to buy American goods. The only criticism of the program was directed not toward the government but toward U.S. businesses that balked at increasing their purchases of foreign products. To successfully export, the Farm Bureau argued, a nation must also be willing to import, and the

⁶²Testimony of Allan Kline, March 28, 1952, U.S. Congress, Senate, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, Mutual Security Act of 1952: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, p. 442.

⁶³American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, November 24, 1952, p. 2.

sacrifices must be shared by both the agricultural and non-agricultural segments of the economy.⁶⁴

Whether they were criticizing the mutual security program, praising reciprocal trade, or even discussing an issue only marginally related to the concerns of most farmers, Farm Bureau officials never strayed far from their Cold War concerns about competition with the Soviet Union. When it was suggested in 1951 that long-standing tariff concessions regulating the importation of Swiss watches be dropped, the Bureau protested not only because Americans presumably enjoyed the craftsmanship of precision instruments, but also because withdrawal of the concessions, the organization told the U.S. Tariff Commission, "might force Switzerland to turn to the Iron Curtain countries for a market. . . ."⁶⁵ This obsession with Soviet competition, an obsession that to a lesser degree was shared by the Grange, was typical of a large segment of American society in the early years of the Cold War. Viewing the Communist philosophy as a threat to the American way of life, most Americans reacted in a predictably antagonistic fashion by lashing out at the perceived enemy.

⁶⁴American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, December 25, 1950, p. 4, September 29, 1952, p. 2, and October 6, 1952, p. 3; Testimony of John C. Lynn, January 24, 1951, U.S. Congress, House, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, Extension of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act: Hearing Before the Committee on Ways and Means, pp. 151-169.

⁶⁵Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," June 11, 1951, p. 1.

The last of the nation's major farm organizations, the National Farmers Union, stood alone in rejecting this Cold War mentality. Since its birth in Texas in 1902, the Farmers Union had supported the efforts of America's smaller farmers to improve their lifestyles and simultaneously had opposed what it viewed as a dangerous trend toward corporate domination of American life. Its compassion for the less privileged gave the Farmers Union a different perspective on world events. In recognizing more so than most Americans the complexities of Communism, the Farmers Union moved beyond a knee-jerk reaction to the Soviet Union as a monolithic threat to national security. In rejecting the primacy of corporate expansion, the Farmers Union also questioned the existence of a Soviet threat to the American economy.

Arguing for cooperation over confrontation, the Farmers Union favored friendly collaboration among the world's leading powers, immediate support for the efforts of the United Nations, and avoidance of any unilateral activity that either by-passed the U.N. or sought to further national self-interest at the expense of international harmony. National president James G. Patton viewed the immediate post-war years as a time for the United States to "assume a sound, constructive, realistic and cooperative role in

shaping the future of the entire world." Such a role included an essential understanding with the Soviet Union and a rejection of "an arms-length attitude of fear, suspicion and fatal hesitation toward our allies and the people we are pledged to liberate."⁶⁶ Speaking to the annual convention of the South Dakota Farmers Union in the fall of 1945, Patton argued for an approach to international affairs in which Americans:

learn to live in a peace based on patience, tolerance and understanding of the peoples who do not speak our language, who do not use our form of government and whose concepts are predicated upon centuries of economic, social and political backgrounds widely different from ours. Specifically, we must learn to live in this world with the great country of Russia. We simply must come to understand how Russian people think, why they do what they do, and then guide our foreign policy in terms of a firm position but with determination to co-operate to live in peace.⁶⁷

The Farmers Union role as Cold War critic was in many ways paradoxical. In the first place, its membership of 500,000 was by the end of World War II no longer centered as it was in its earliest days in the South. Instead, the organization's strength by 1945 resided in the Plains states, with Wisconsin, the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma leading the way. With its membership focused in this wheat-producing region, and with wheat ranking high on the list of America's agricultural exports, one would expect it to be

⁶⁶James G. Patton, "The Federal Government's Role in the Postwar Economy," American Political Science Review XXXVIII (December, 1944), p. 1126; National Farmers Union, "Abundance, Freedom, Peace, or Scarcity, Want, World War Three," 1944 pamphlet, Stover Papers.

⁶⁷National Union Farmer, October 15, 1945, p. 5.

the Farmers Union, and not the corn belt-centered Farm Bureau, pushing for expansion of overseas markets. Such, however, was not the case.

A second seeming contradiction was the disparity between the organization's original 1902 insistence that "dabbling in politics dissipates farm movements"⁶⁸ and its active participation in the post-war period in a host of politically-charged issues that the Farm Bureau and National Grange insisted on avoiding. The scope of the Farmers Union interest in all manner of issues, and the comparative lack of involvement by the Grange and the Farm Bureau, was highlighted in a 1947 State Department study of "Current Leadership Opinion on Major Foreign Policy Issues." Noting the Farmers Union as the sole agrarian organization represented in the study, the authors explained that the other two groups were not included "because they have not taken a stand on most of the issues examined. They largely confine their expressions of opinion to issues more directly connected with their special fields of interest." A similar study four years later concluded that of the nation's major agricultural organizations the Farmers Union demonstrated "the widest range of interest and the greatest inclination to express itself on humanitarian causes not particularly of interest to farmers."⁶⁹ This

⁶⁸John A. Crampton, The National Farmers Union: Ideology of a Pressure Group (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 77.

⁶⁹Department of State, Office of Public Opinion Studies, "Current

diversity of interests caused one contemporary observer to criticize the Farmers Union for "scatter[ing] its energies on too many nonagricultural matters."⁷⁰ In truth, however, the breadth of the organization's concerns was one of its most impressive strengths. It also showed how far the organization had come from its original rejection of political involvement.

The role of the Farmers Union as Cold War critic was equally remarkable because of the organization's lengthy history of internal squabbling. Early bickering over the predominance of the Texas group in leadership roles was followed in subsequent years by intense disputes over the issues of expanded political activity, organizational membership for non-farmers, and opposition by some particularly vocal factions to the policies of the New Deal. The occasional intensity of these internal debates led Jim Patton to characterize one four-year period in the organization's history as an "Irish Picnic" in which "everybody grabbed a shillala and hit the first person he could see."⁷¹

Leadership Opinion on Major Foreign Policy Issues, June 4, 1947, p. 3, Box 19, Record Group 59, National Archives; Department of State, "Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," January 24, 1951, p. 2.

⁷⁰William P. Tucker, "Populism Up-to-Date: The Story of the Farmers Union," Agricultural History XXI (October, 1947), p. 208.

⁷¹Quoted in Charles H. Livermore, "James G. Patton: Nineteenth-Century Populist, Twentieth-Century Organizer, Twenty-First Century Visionary," PhD dissertation, University of Denver, 1976, p. 15. The early internal disputes are also dealt with in Tucker, "Populism Up-to-Date," pp. 198-208.

That such a raucously divided, supposedly non-political organization of primarily wheat producing farmers would play a role as one of the leading critics of U.S. foreign policy was the result of both an activist leadership and an impressive dedication to principle. Jim Patton's election to the national presidency in 1940, and the elevation to power of such significant state figures as North Dakota's Glenn Talbott and Iowa's Fred Stover, heralded the beginning of a more united and more politically motivated organization. Acknowledging their allegiance to the domestic policies of Franklin Roosevelt, this new leadership turned away from internal bickering and instead focused much of their criticism on what they perceived as the Farm Bureau's dangerous advocacy of big business. The "moral disintegration of the Farm Bureau leadership," could be seen, Stover's Iowa Union Farmer charged in 1946, in President Allan Kline's announcement that "there are too many farmers" in America. Suggesting that "the Farm Bureau is in reality a subsidiary of the National Association of Manufacturers," the Iowa paper in 1951 cited the late Senator George Norris's observation that, "The time will come when the rank and file of American farmers will realize by whom they are being deceived." For their part, Farm Bureau leaders were equally critical of the Farmers Union, characterizing it as a _____ and in Dyson, Farmers' Organizations, pp. 224-225.

"radical vocal minority" unfit to speak for the nation's farmers.⁷²

The animosity between the Farmers Union and the Farm Bureau was a reflection of the organizations' contrasting memberships as well as their opposing visions for America's future. Representing the interests of the nation's larger, corporate-oriented farmers, the Farm Bureau envisioned an active American role in the world economy led by the most powerful elements of American society. Advocating a Darwinian view of competition, the Farm Bureau championed a corporate-agrarian partnership that actively sought a dominant position both on the homefront as well as in the wider field of world affairs. Those smaller farmers less able to compete were encouraged to pursue other means of making a living, and those nations intent on challenging American economic supremacy were similarly warned to step aside.

Farmers Union officials rejected the "capitalistic survival of the fittest" as leading to "survival of the greediest,"⁷³ and envisioned a more

⁷²Iowa Union Farmer, May 11, 1946, p. 1, and January, 1951, p. 4; E. Howard Hill address to the Winneshiek County Farm Service Company, December 20, 1951, p. 5, Box 9, Folder 6, Hill Papers.

⁷³F.W. Stover, "What Kind of a Future Farm Program Do We Want?" April 15, 1937 radio address, p. 4, Stover Papers. Besides demonstrating a knowledge of Darwinian theory, the address' reference to the "frontier as a safety valve" also showed a working knowledge of the theories of historian Frederick Jackson Turner. National president Jim Patton demonstrated a similar familiarity with Turner with his 1942 observation that some

cooperative world, both at home and abroad. Unlike the Grange, which had abandoned its populist ideology, the Farmers Union took seriously its role as spokesman for the underdog. The first sentence of the organization's March, 1952, "Golden Jubilee" issue of the National Union Farmer spoke disparagingly of the "robber barons" of the nineteenth century, and the paragraphs immediately following reminded readers of Farmers Union ties to the Greenback Movement, the Silver Movement, the Populist Party, the Farmers Alliance, and William Jennings Bryan.⁷⁴ As an advocate more for the nation's workers than for its corporate directors, the Farmers Union stood alone in arguing for a close relationship between America's farmers and its industrial workers. Opposition to the Taft-Hartley Act and active support for what John Crampton called "the Union's major postwar ideologic victory,"⁷⁵ the 1946 passage of the Full Employment Act, demonstrated how in the area of farmer-labor relations the Farmers Union once again stood apart from both the Bureau and the Grange.

This cooperative mentality revealed itself in the Farmers Union position on foreign affairs through the organization's principled insistence that inequalities in American life were the result of "running out of the frontier." (James G. Patton, "Again the Call is for Pioneers," commencement address at Western State College, Gunnison, Colorado, June 5, 1942, p. 4.)

⁷⁴National Union Farmer, March, 1952, p. 19.

⁷⁵Crampton, Ideology of a Pressure Group, p. 184.

world peace was a more important consideration than extension of American markets. Rejecting the Farm Bureau plea that the Soviet Union represented a genuine threat to America's economic stability, Farmers Union leaders argued that a policy of abundant production allowed sufficient markets for all nations. There was no need, Jim Patton and other Farmers Union officials insisted, for the world to be divided into ideological spheres of influence controlled by military, political, and economic antagonists. It was also unnecessary, the organization argued, for the United States to unilaterally impose its will upon the world, or for American business interests to so dominate the life of the nation that farmers and other laborers were left behind in their quest for economic equality.

Unfortunately for the Farmers Union, the appeals for international cooperation and abundance for all attracted little support. As the Cold War intensified, the nationalistic and self-interested arguments of the Grange and the Farm Bureau more typically represented the thinking of the nation. The Farmers Union nevertheless persisted in its views and, until the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, served as one of the few voices of dissent from the Cold War rhetoric that swept the United States.

Chapter Two

Protesting Unilateralism

Franklin Roosevelt's April, 1945, death left the formation of America's postwar foreign policy in the hands of Harry Truman. Awed by his unexpected elevation to power, but rejecting what surely was an understandable tendency to hesitate, the new President instantly declared one of his primary goals for the immediate future. "We must," Truman told his secretary of state, "stand up to the Russians."¹ In the first two years of the Truman administration, this desire for a tough policy contributed to U.S. strengthening of Chiang Kai-shek's regime in China, American efforts to retain exclusive control over atomic weapons, the sending of naval forces to patrol the Mediterranean, a showdown with the Soviets over Iran, and President Truman's quasi-official support for Winston Churchill's "iron curtain" speech at Fulton, Missouri. Between 1947 and 1950, years marked by Truman's growing confidence as President, it also led to the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine, Secretary of State George Marshall's European

¹Quoted in Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1984, fifth edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), p. 16.

Recovery Program, the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the NSC-68 re-evaluation of U.S. foreign policy, and the sending of U.S. troops to Korea. All of these programs, from the ill-defined steps of 1945-1946 to the more focused measures of 1947-1950, were said by the President to be necessary to limit Soviet communist expansion.

The rationale for American policy was offered by career diplomat George F. Kennan, who in a July, 1947, article in Foreign Affairs called for the "containment" of the Soviet Union through the "adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points."² Kennan's analysis of Soviet expansion and his suggestion of containment as an appropriate response became the hallmark of a U.S. policy determined to see the world in dichotomous terms. The Soviet Union, which through the course of four years had fought side by side with American forces in the effort to defeat totalitarianism, now became the enemy in a world of black and white, of good and evil. As the chief defender of democratic principles, the United States, so Truman argued, carried the weighty responsibility of protecting the world against the new terror of Soviet Communist expansion.

While Truman's "get tough" attitude toward the Soviet Union received

²"The Sources of Soviet Conduct," Foreign Affairs XXV (July, 1947), p. 576.

broad support, the National Farmers Union was unconvinced of the necessity for containment. It viewed administration actions as driven less by the desire to impede Soviet expansion and more by Truman's eagerness to establish what Henry Luce had termed an "American Century." The Farmers Union rejected the dichotomous world view offered by President Truman and supported instead a world of international cooperation whose cornerstone was an effectively functioning United Nations. Expressing a faith in international cooperation that occasionally included calls for constitutional world government, the Farmers Union took the lead in championing the work of the United Nations and in criticizing activities that it felt by-passed the organization. The Farmers Union executive committee echoed this sentiment when in late 1946 it informed the State Department of its belief that, "Any attempt on the part of single nations to handle relief and displaced persons will not be effective and will create additional strains between members of United Nations."³ In the same month, the Montana division of the Farmers Union urged the United States government to cease unilateral military activities by withdrawing American troops "in India and China, and other foreign countries not under the jurisdiction of the U.S. army

³Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," December 6, 1946, p. 4.

of occupation."⁴ Farmers Union faith in United Nations action, and the manner in which it differed on this topic from the other farm organizations, was evident in the State Department's evaluation that:

The Farmers Union has tended to favor action through the U.N. instead of reliance on paramount U.S. military power, whereas the others, particularly the Farm Bureau Federation, tended to favor action through the U.N. along with maintenance of strong U.S. military power.⁵

Such an approach to foreign affairs prompted the State Department to categorize the Farmers Union as "liberals" and as "internationalists seeking to minimize use of power." In the government's view, this placed the organization in the company of the Chicago Sun, PM, the Raleigh News and Observer, the New Republic, the C.I.O., the League of Women Voters, and Henry Wallace.⁶

Farmers Union opposition to Truman's policies had not begun with the President's first day in office. In fact, although devastated by the death of Franklin Roosevelt, Jim Patton had taken the time to urge Americans "to rally behind President Truman."⁷ On at least two occasions in early 1946, the Farmers Union did just that. At its annual convention in March, the

⁴Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," November 22, 1946, p. 3.

⁵Department of State, "Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," January 24, 1951, p. 5.

⁶Department of State, "Current Leadership Opinion," June 4, 1947, p. 3.

⁷National Union Farmer, April 15, 1945, p. 4.

organization openly supported the President's plan for a post-war loan to Great Britain. Noting that the British had for years provided "an important market for agricultural exports," the Farmers Union favored the \$3.75 billion loan as of "immediate self-interest" to farmers. Jim Patton even worked closely with the State Department in responding to the charge that the loan actually gave England "tremendous advantages over American business."⁸

In that same month, the Farmers Union once again showed a willingness to cooperate with President Truman when it remained silent following Winston Churchill's "iron curtain" speech in Fulton, Missouri. While the liberal Christian Century led widespread media criticism of the speech by noting that, "not even Hitler in the days of his power resorted to more naked military warnings than Churchill thundered forth in his Missouri speech," and while a joint Senatorial statement criticized the British leader for attempting to "cut the throat of the United Nations,"⁹ the Farmers Union spokesmen chose to keep to themselves whatever criticisms they may have

⁸National Union Farmer, April 15, 1946, p. 1 of "program section;" James G. Patton to William Benton, May 14, 1946, 811.50/5-446, Box 4834, Record Group 59 (Department of State Decimal File 1945-1949), National Archives.

⁹"On Talking Tough," Christian Century LXIII (March 20, 1946), p. 358; New York Times, March 7, 1946, p. 1

had.

The "rally behind President Truman" ended quickly, however, and by mid-1946 whatever honeymoon had existed between the National Farmers Union and President Truman was over. When the President lashed out at striking railroad workers, threatening to draft them into the military if they continued their boycotts, Patton was enraged. Hearing of the events at home while attending an international farm organization conference in London, Patton called the incident "a shameful hour in American history" and characterized Truman's actions as "naked, open fascism." Repeating the Christian Century's earlier analogy, the Farmers Union leader bitingly noted that, "Hitler himself also confiscated business profits when it was expedient to do so." Later, in a report to the National Farmers Union board of directors, Patton charged that the President's "long step toward fascism" was "the sign of a very weak man." On his return to the United States, Patton ordered a drastic reduction in the size of the organization's offices in Washington, D.C. The reason, he argued, was that the Farmers Union had "lost confidence" in the direction of the administration. A conciliatory meeting between Patton and Truman in July did little to heal the growing differences between the President and the Farmers Union.¹⁰

¹⁰Iowa Union Farmer, June 8, 1946, p. 3, July 13, 1946, p. 1, and July 27, 1946, pp. 1-2; Alonzo Hamby, Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and

While the rift involved both domestic policy and foreign affairs, the latter took center stage following Truman's first year in office. One particularly volatile area of disagreement was atomic energy, where the Farmers Union was intent on expanding consideration of peaceful uses and minimizing, even eliminating, military applications. Jim Patton's call for the free availability of atomic research information to all the people of the world was reflected in his praise for One World or None, a 1946 work written by seventeen well-respected leaders in the fields of science, journalism, and military affairs. Recognized by Newsweek as "an important challenge . . . to abolish war if the world is to survive," the book included a chapter by Walter Lippmann that argued for the necessity of a world state developed out of the framework of the United Nations. Lippmann's statement combined with commentaries by physicists J.R. Oppenheimer, Albert Einstein, and Niels Bohr to inform the world "that only through world government and the abolishment of national sovereignty can we control atomic energy. . . ." In mailing copies of the work to his state presidents, Patton praised the publication as "the best thing which has been done to

American Liberalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), pp. 75-6; Curtis D. MacDougall, Gideon's Army (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1965), p. 608; "Report of James G. Patton, President, to the Board of Directors," June 28, 1946, Box 57, Folder "National Farmers Union 1946," Jackson Papers.

date on atomic energy."¹¹ His views became part of the Union's 1946 program when the convention asked the U.S. government "to stop the manufacture of atomic bombs immediately, and to offer to dismantle the bombs already made." It was only by taking this step, the Farmers Union statement continued, that "the United States [could] convince other nations of our good faith, and thereby halt an international race in fabrication of atomic bombs." Patton's attendance at a University of Chicago conference on atomic energy held in late 1946, reinforced his belief that "there must be a great movement gotten underway for complete disarmament, right down to pistols."¹²

The Farmers Union approach to the question of atomic power was markedly different from the Truman administration's design presented to the United Nations by Bernard Baruch in mid-1946. More concerned with the military applications of atomic energy than with its peaceful uses, Baruch's plan sought American control over further development of atomic

¹¹ National Union Farmer, October 15, 1945, p. 5; Newsweek XXVII (April 1, 1946), pp. 93-94; Dexter Masters and Katherine Way, eds., One World or None: A Report to the Public on the Full Meaning of the Atomic Bomb, with April 16, 1946, cover letter from Jim Patton, Stover Papers.

¹² National Union Farmer, April 15, 1946, p. 1 of "program section;" "Statement of James G. Patton Before Executive Committee of National Board of Directors, National Farmers Union," December 17, 1946, Box 2, Folder "National Farmers Union Board of Directors 1946-1948," Farmers Union of the New York Milk Shed Records 1939-1957, Collection #1858, Cornell University Library.

resources, and led to a unilateral American approach when the Soviet Union, not surprisingly, rejected the Baruch proposal. The administration's attitude prompted one Farmers Union leader, Northeastern Division president Archie Wright, to lament the future possibilities for his children, possibilities that he saw as "gamma ray poisoning, at worst, or at best, the prospect of having to bring down their meat with bows and arrows. That interests me a lot more," he concluded, "than stories about the terrible Russians."¹³

President Truman's treatment of Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace following Wallace's "The Way to Peace" speech in New York City on September 12, 1946, sealed the divisions between the Farmers Union and the President. The former secretary of agriculture and vice president openly challenged the "get tough" policies of President Truman and Secretary of State James Byrnes by calling for mutual cooperation with the Soviet Union and for concessions on the part of both nations to guarantee a world of friendly competition. He further called for limitations on military expenditures and for sole possession of atomic bombs in the hands of the

¹³Walter LaFeber, The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad Since 1750 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), pp. 447-448; Archie Wright to Clarence Kilburn, February 22, 1950, Box 2, Folder "Clarence Kilburn 1948-1956," New York Milk Shed Records.

United Nations. His call for an international system "based on moral principles and not on the Machiavellian principles of deceit, force and distrust" led to demands for his resignation from Senators Arthur Vandenberg and Tom Connally, to angry reactions from administration figures James Forrestal, James Byrnes, and George Kennan, and to heated media criticism that Wallace was suggesting a return to the "repulsive" concept of appeasement that could not possibly work with a Soviet nation addicted to a "messianic psychology." The widespread negative reaction led to Wallace's forced resignation eight days after the speech.¹⁴

Wallace's statements had been sponsored in part by the National Citizens Political Action Committee, an organization born in June of 1944, with Jim Patton as one of its vice chairmen. Two months prior to the speech, when

¹⁴The Wallace speech can be found in Vital Speeches of the Day XII (October 1, 1946), pp. 738-741. For a sampling of congressional and administrative criticism, see "The Liberals and '46," New Republic CXV (September 30, 1946), p. 396; "The Wallace Speech," Nation CLXIII (September 21, 1946), p. 311; "The Wallace Speech," Commonweal XLIV (September 27, 1946), p. 563; New York Times, September 18, 1946, p.1; Time XLVIII (September 30, 1946), p. 26; Congressional Record, 80th Congress, 1st Session, pp. A3249 and 6745; and J. Samuel Walker, Henry A. Wallace and American Foreign Policy (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 159. Examples of media criticism will be found in "The Speech," Time XLVIII (September 23, 1946), p. 28; David Lawrence, "Who Speaks for America--Wallace or Byrnes?," U.S. News and World Report XXI (September 20, 1946), pp. 28-9; "Foreign Policy of Mr. Wallace: Press Evaluation," U.S. News and World Report XXI (September 27, 1946), pp. 31-2; and "An Embarrassed President," Christian Century LXIII (September 25, 1946), p. 1142.

Wallace had written President Truman a letter criticizing Bernard Baruch's atomic control plan, Patton had supported Wallace's stand. Ten days after Wallace's address, the position of the National Farmers Union was clearly stated in a St. Paul radio broadcast made by Gordon Roth, the director of public relations for the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association, who referred to the "get tough" policy of the Truman administration as an "unfortunate" ingredient in an "inevitable march to war." Praising Wallace for going beyond partisan politics, Roth noted that, "The hysteria and almost artificial indignation reminds one of the criticism that President Roosevelt got when he gave his 'quarantine-the-aggressors' speech in Chicago before World War II."¹⁵

A week after Wallace's speech, Jim Patton joined 300 delegates in Chicago for a Conference of Progressives. Attended by such notables as Elmer Benson, Harold Ickes, Hans Morgenthau, and Claude Pepper, the gathering resulted from a desire "to carry on the fight for fulfillment of the domestic and foreign policy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt." While the meeting dealt with a variety of issues, many of them of a primarily

¹⁵MacDougall, Gideon's Army, pp. 49-52; James G. Patton, 1946 guest editorial in Denver Post, Folder "1945-1946," Jim Patton Archives, National Farmers Union Offices, Denver, Colorado; Gordon Roth, "Food for Freedom Program," radio address of September 22, 1946, Stover Papers.

domestic nature, the program's foreign policy section took a solid stand against "the United States' attempt to obtain military bases around the world" and announced firm support for ending any close military alliance with the British and for stoppage of the manufacturing and stockpiling of atomic weapons.¹⁶ Patton's convention address, his most outspoken statement to date, denounced the Truman administration's "new imperialist adventures backed to the hilt by American diplomacy and American arms."¹⁷

Two days before the Conference of Progressives, Jim Patton had joined with Iowa Farmers Union president Fred Stover in a unanimous endorsement of Henry Wallace's foreign policy at the 30th annual convention of the Iowa Farmers Union in Des Moines. Delegates approved a foreign policy statement that opposed a "world-wide American military force" that was "costing the American people \$18,000,000,000 a year." In his address to the Iowa convention, Patton praised Henry Wallace as "one of the most stimulating, refreshing thinkers we have ever had," and then questioned the necessity of an eighteen billion dollar military budget when he told the convention that, "We are either getting ready to whale the tar out of

¹⁶"Progressives Mobilize for Action," The Railroad Trainman LXIII (December, 1946), pp. 402-406; MacDougall, Gideon's Army, pp. 105-106.

¹⁷National Union Farmer, October 1, 1946, p. 3.

somebody pretty soon, or we shouldn't be spending that much money for military affairs"18

The highlight of the Iowa convention was a lengthy analysis of U.S. foreign policy presented by Waldo R. McNutt, president of the Eastern Division of the National Farmers Union. Beginning with a comparison of recent statements made by Henry Wallace and Herbert Hoover, McNutt castigated the latter's suggestion of extending the American defense perimeter as "American imperialism and power politics," and praised the former for "carrying on the Roosevelt tradition of food for peace, for full employment and the century of the common man." Arguing that in firing Wallace, President Truman had folded under pressure from Byrnes and Vandenberg, a "combination of southern reactionaries and northern money," McNutt criticized the Truman administration for expanding America's economic domination, for propping up British colonial exploitation, and for adopting the "get tough" attitude toward the Soviet Union. The Soviets, McNutt told the convention, had suffered the most from World War II, and now, in the aftermath of the fighting, U.S. efforts to deal harshly with our former ally represented a clear reversal of stated wartime goals. As the Soviets continued the Allied wartime effort "to wipe out fascism everywhere," by seeking a "free and democratic China" and by assisting in

¹⁸Iowa Union Farmer, September 28, 1946, pp. 1-4.

the ouster of "notorious kings" in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Hungary, the United States and Great Britain restored a repressive Greek government, trained and equipped Dutch soldiers to further colonial exploitation in Indonesia, backed the corrupt Chiang Kai-shek in China, and "teamed up to use the threat of atomic warfare against our former ally." Using events in China as the best example of America's "new globe girdling plans," McNutt questioned the granting of \$602 million in post-war aid to Chiang Kai-shek and the training of forty Chinese divisions in the same time period, when during the entirety of the war the U.S. had spent less money and trained less divisions to aid the Chinese in their fight against Japan. Labelling American actions "reactionary," McNutt concluded that continuation of such policies would lead to disaster.¹⁹

A month after the Iowa convention, Northeastern division president Archie Wright published an article entitled "A Double Standard Foreign Policy" praising Henry Wallace for his courage in speaking out against a policy that in his view was becoming less "pro-American" and more "anti-Russian." Wright pointed out that the United States had:

... grabbed bases close up to Russia's borders and howled our heads off about Russia's border states. . . . We have talked war openly and then condemned Russian defense preparations as provocative. We have demanded that everyone, and especially the Russians, park their

¹⁹Iowa Union Farmer, October 12, 1946, pp. 1-4.

guns and uranium inventories at the door while we atom bomb our smug paternal guidance to all the world.²⁰

Farmers Union dissent with a peace-time military budget of \$18 billion, increased aid to Chiang Kai-shek, the attempt to preserve American control of atomic weapons, and the overall aggressive policy toward the Soviet Union reached a new peak in March, 1947, following President Truman's official declaration of cold war. Appearing before a joint session of Congress, the President asked for \$400 million in aid for the nations of Greece and Turkey. These countries had previously fallen under the paternal eye of Great Britain, but that nation's resources were too drained by war to continue financial aid beyond the spring of 1947. The President told the nation's Congress that Greece, and Turkey to a lesser extent, were threatened by communist-led terrorist activities, and that there was no other country to which those nations could turn but the United States. American assistance was essential if "international peace and hence the security of the United States" were to be maintained.²¹

The response of the National Farmers Union to this "Truman Doctrine" was swift and unequivocal. Meeting in St. Paul for its biennial Officers' and

²⁰Iowa Union Farmer, October 26, 1946, p. 1.

²¹Hugh Ross, editor, The Cold War: Containment and Its Critics (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1963), p. 6.

Leaders' Conference, the Farmers Union Board of Directors unanimously approved a resolution condemning Truman's appeal as supportive of "undemocratic regimes" and as unnecessarily by-passing the United Nations. Charging that the program signaled the imposition of a new American imperialism abroad, the resolution called upon "all liberty-loving people" to speak out in opposition to the plan.²²

At the close of the conference, Jim Patton further elaborated on the Farmers Union opposition to Truman's new policies when he told the delegates that:

The by-passing of the United Nations Organization, the underwriting of a fascistic type of government in Turkey, the support of Kings in Greece who long ago should have been thrown out, the attempt to militarize a front against Communism in the world, is a part of the whole front of reaction.²³

Patton then telegraphed the organization's concerns to President Truman, warning him that such "unilateral imperialistic action" on the part of the United States would "doom the United Nations more surely than the Senate irreconcilables of the 1920's doomed the League of Nations dream of Woodrow Wilson." Patton assured the President that the National Farmers

²²Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of National Farmers Union at the St. Paul Hotel, St. Paul, Minnesota on March 22 and 23, 1947," Stover Papers.

²³Synopsis of James G. Patton's Remarks at the Close of the NFU Leaders' Conference," St. Paul, March 21, 1947, Folder "1947-1948," Patton Archives.

Union was not opposed to going to the aid of Greece and Turkey, but preferred that assistance be carried out through U.N. agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and the Food and Agriculture Organization, that the aid be of a non-military nature, and that the expenditures be funneled not to the monarchistic governments but instead to the people of those nations. Rather than continue a policy of "saber-rattling, oppressive imperialism," Patton asked the President to consider instead an aid package similar to the one offered by Democratic senators Claude Pepper and Glen Taylor. That resolution, which left Turkey out of the picture entirely, called for U.N.-administered aid to Greece, "specifically excluded" all military assistance, and based approval of the program on Greek assurances that the funds would be distributed in a non-discriminatory manner. Truman, and Congress, quickly and resoundingly rejected the Pepper-Taylor alternative.²⁴

The State Department, in citing the National Farmers Union opposition to the "unilateral nature . . . and the military rather than relief emphasis" of Greek and Turkish aid, characterized Patton's feelings toward the program as "dubious." In truth, his opposition went well beyond dubious. As a

²⁴National Union Farmer, April 1, 1947, p. 12; William C. Pratt, "Senator Glen H. Taylor: Questioning American Unilateralism," in Thomas G. Paterson, editor, Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 151-152.

sponsor of the Denver Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Patton supported that organization's portrayal of the Truman program as a repudiation of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements that intended as its ultimate goal "the building up of an iron ring around the Soviet Union." In a statement that protested the "sending [of] arms and military personnel to Greece and Turkey," the Denver council restated the Farmers Union belief that Truman's "policy toward Greece and Turkey pointedly ignores . . . the United Nations organization."²⁵

Two weeks after the Farmers Union meeting in St. Paul, the organization's legislative secretary, Russell Smith, testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the topic of "Assistance to Greece and Turkey." Attacking the program as "the culmination of a deliberate policy of unilateralism that has been pursued with respect to the Near and Middle East for at least six months," Smith argued that American intervention in the internal affairs of other nations would lead to "the hearty hatred of the masses of the people in those countries." Opposing ideologies, he continued,

²⁵Department of State, "Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," January 24, 1951, pp. 4 and 7; Mrs. Herbert D. Ulmer to Charles A. Eaton, March 31, 1947, with accompanying pamphlet of the Denver Council of American-Soviet Friendship entitled "War or Peace, Choose Now!," Box 483, Folder "Aid to Greece and Turkey, March 1947, Folder 4 of 5," Committee on Foreign Affairs, 80th Congress, Record Group 233 (Records of the U.S. House of Representatives), National Archives.

were best fought not by military means but "by affording to the masses of the Greek people the means for building a permanently productive economy." Smith criticized both the United States and Great Britain for failing to exert their influence in favor of F.A.O. proposals for Greece and observed that the two nations had "collaborated in a do-nothing policy that finally has resulted in the present emergency." He praised the Truman administration for wisely following George Marshall's 1946 advice to back off from a similarly volatile situation in China, where United States support for the uncooperative Chiang Kai-shek had led to Chinese resentment of the United States. Smith wondered why the same strategy had not been followed to avoid an "untenable" American position "between the Greek monarchy and its opponents." He then summarized Farmers Union opposition to Truman's aid package for Greece and Turkey by noting that U.S. funds "should not be used to support the military power of any foreign government" and that "bypassing of the U.N. by its most powerful member . . . inevitably delivers a seriously damaging blow to the U.N."²⁶

In addition to Russell Smith's testimony, the committee was flooded with protests decrying American intentions of assuming the role of British

²⁶Testimony of Russell Smith, April 9, 1947, U.S. Congress, House, 80th Congress, 1st Session, Assistance to Greece and Turkey: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, pp. 311-313.

imperialism in the region and specifically objecting to the by-passing of the United Nations. The magnitude of the protest prompted U.N. ambassador Warren Austin to telegram committee chairman Charles Eaton with the pointed argument that "the United States program for aid to Greece and Turkey does not repeat not by-pass the United Nations." Arguing what by now had become the standard administration explanation for failure to use the U.N. more consistently, Ambassador Austin justified United States action with the statement that, "No organ of the United Nations can at this time provide financial and military assistance to the Greek government of the emergency required," but that:

when stable conditions are restored in Greece it should be possible to provide such further financial and economic assistance as might then be required through the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and related specialized agencies.²⁷

Such explanations carried little weight with Farmers Union leaders, who, had they seen Austin's telegram, surely would have noted his distinction between American-supplied military assistance and U.N.-provided economic aid.

Some Farmers Union leaders based their objections to the Truman Doctrine on the American tradition of supporting the right of national self-determination. Observing that he was "profoundly disturbed by the present

²⁷Warren R. Austin to Charles A. Eaton, May 8, 1947, Box 483, Folder "Greek and Turkey Aid (General)," Record Group 233.

condition of American Foreign Affairs," Alabama president Aubrey Williams feared that American policymakers had:

thrown over board the traditional American policy of the fight of the peoples of the world to determine what shall be their way of life--of self-determination--and have set out to force upon them our ideas of what their way of life should be--and to force it upon them at the point of a gun.²⁸

Iowa's Fred Stover agreed with Williams, and in an editorial entitled "Imperialism At Its Worst," he assailed the President for betraying the Jeffersonian revolutionary ideology of the United States by supporting the "tottering monarchies" and "forces of oppression" in Greece and Turkey. Stover also accused Truman of reneging on the Yalta promise to work toward a peaceful settlement of the Dardenelles issue; instead, Stover argued, the United States was now "unilaterally support[ing] the Turkish army which has historically permitted the Dardenelles to be used against Russia and has historically held that strategic waterway as agent for the western powers." The editorial suggested American duplicity with its questioning of the odd coincidence that an F.A.O. program for Greece had been taken off the agenda of the United Nations' Social and Economic Council on the "same day that Britain notified our government of its decision to end financial aid to

²⁸"A Farmers' Union Program for American Agriculture," address given by Aubrey Williams, August 2, 1947, Box 35, Folder "Farmers Union Correspondence 1947," Aubrey Williams Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

Greece.²⁹

The Iowa Union Farmer ran an accompanying editorial taken from Facts for Farmers entitled "F.A.O. Challenges Truman on Greece." It provided details of a report made by an eleven-man F.A.O. mission headed by Utah Agricultural College's Franklin S. Harris after visiting Greece in the spring and summer of 1946. The proposals made by the group were "at total variance with the demands made by President Truman," particularly on the issue of military expenditures. Noting that current Greek military spending was a major factor in that nation's growing inflation and in the "extreme inequality in the distribution of wealth," the mission proposed that funds be earmarked for non-military purposes such as development of water resources, improvement of agricultural methods, and expansion of industry and foreign trade. To continue instead along the lines proposed by President Truman would be "a fundamental departure from traditional American foreign policy" and would be a shallow use of supposed food relief "as a cover for a program of 'military lend-lease.'" Like the Stover editorial, Facts for Farmers also wondered if there was not some oddity in the timing of Truman's speech, in this case insinuating that the President had intentionally stifled the effect of the F.A.O. report by going before Congress

²⁹Iowa Union Farmer, April 19, 1947, p. 4.

two days before release of the F.A.O. findings.³⁰

The unwillingness of the Truman administration to work through the Food and Agriculture Organization was particularly galling to Jim Patton. As a delegate to the 1945 United Nations conference in San Francisco, Patton had specifically worked for the success of F.A.O. as an agency geared toward increasing worldwide agricultural production and distribution. Instead, he had found his efforts blocked by State Department "indifference," complaining as early as April, 1945, to assistant secretary of state Will Clayton of the department's foot-dragging on what Patton saw as the "most important job facing the United Nations." A year and a half after the U.N. conference, Patton was still incensed over Clayton's "devoting much of his energy to preventing establishment" of workable international food agencies, and in January of 1947 the farm leader vented his anger in a speech to the Eastern division of the National Farmers Union. "Our international relationships," Patton charged:

have deteriorated to inter-power diplomatic jockeying, with emphasis on building economic, geographic, legalistic and military barriers against the next war, and with virtually no time given to establishing and pushing forward the positive salients of peace.

High on Patton's list of "positive salients of peace" was an F.A.O. program of nutrition that aided in the supply of food to the world's needy people. Two

³⁰Iowa Union Farmer, April 19, 1947, p. 4.

months later, with the introduction of the Truman Doctrine, Patton's hopes for a vigorous F.A.O. backed by the United States were dead.³¹

Farmers Union discontent with the Truman administration's foreign policy increased with George Marshall's June, 1947, request for a multi-billion dollar program to further the economic recovery of Europe. Although the organization supported the revival of the European economy, and while Jim Patton agreed to work with the administration in its efforts to do so, it is misleading to suggest, as Charles Livermore has in his study of Jim Patton, that the Farmers Union was "an enthusiastic supporter" of the Marshall Plan.³² Instead, Patton and other Farmers Union leaders criticized the Marshall Plan for the same primary reason they had given in repudiating Truman's assistance to Greece and Turkey--the failure of the United States to act through the United Nations.

In a letter addressed to American farm, labor, and business leaders, a

³¹Livermore, "James G. Patton," pp. 129-130; Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," December 13, 1946, p. 3, and January 31, 1947, p. 3; James G. Patton to Will L. Clayton, April 5, 1945, and W.L. Clayton to James G. Patton, April 10, 1945, 550.ADI Interim Commission/4-545, Box 2403, Record Group 59. Clayton's response to Patton's letter of April 5 denied the accusation of departmental indifference and argued instead that State's delay in dealing with F.A.O. proposals was caused by "general considerations of the total legislative program of the Administration."

³²Livermore, "James G. Patton," p. 127. Livermore's view is based on Patton's 1950 participation in the Economic Cooperation Administration's survey of the impact of the Marshall Plan on Europe.

copy of which he forwarded to Secretary of Agriculture Clinton Anderson, Jim Patton asked for support for the Farmers Union position that, "The Marshall Plan should be carried out under the direction of the Economic Commission for Europe." Such action was essential, Patton argued, to "turn the country from its policy of unilateral action to one of strong, persistent support of the United Nations and its subsidiary units." Failure to do so would mean that the United States would "be committed for from at least four to five years to a policy of single-handed action that threatens the base of enduring peace."

Patton rejected the arguments of critics distrustful of the Economic Commission for Europe because its role in European recovery had been endorsed by the Soviets. Instead, he said, the Soviet endorsement was an excellent reason for working through the commission, as cooperation would increase the chances for "a mutually useful exchange of goods and services between the countries of Eastern and Western Europe," the element of the E.C.E. program that most experts saw as the key to long-term European recovery. Finally, Patton concluded his letter with the stern warning that the United States:

cannot afford to take the position that we are a big bad Santa Claus who is footing the bills and therefore is going to be boss. Such a conception wholly destroys the world democratic structure envisaged when the United Nations was set up at San Francisco. It is bound to

make us the target of resentment instead of gratitude, to cause needless loss and inefficiency in expenditure, and to delay indefinitely the hopes of enduring peace.³³

The American approach to international affairs, according to the Farmers Union, had played a key role in the late 1946 disbanding of U.N.R.R.A., despite a report from the U.N. agency that \$750 million worth of food and clothing would be needed in Europe between January 1 and harvest time in 1947. Truman administration unilateralism also threatened the continued existence of F.A.O. unless the United States Congress increased the amount of funds that it could contribute to that struggling agency. But with some leading American officials reportedly adopting the callous attitude that the end of U.N.R.R.A. was simply the end of the "gravy train," and with other reports surfacing that the American-British-Canadian controlled Combined Food Board of U.N.R.R.A. had systematically played politics with food requests at the expense of Soviet bloc nations, there was little hope that the United States was intending to adopt a more benevolent approach to world relief or rehabilitation. Northeastern Division president Archie Wright's commentary to a New York newspaper that, "If your readers,

³³James G. Patton to Earl O. Shreve, November 18, 1947, Box 1453, Record Group 16 (Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, General Correspondence, 1906-1975), National Archives. Jim Patton also discussed this situation in a letter to "Dear Co-Workers," September 12, 1947, Stover Papers.

farmers and others, favor the European Recovery Program, the Marshall Plan, it is because they don't know what it is," summarized Farmers Union sentiment toward American unilateralism and plans for European recovery.³⁴

Following the September, 1947, passage by the National Farmers Union board of directors of a resolution seeking U.N. sponsorship of European recovery, Patton began 1948 by testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in its hearings on the Marshall Plan. His testimony was influenced by an earlier trip to the nation's capital that had left him discouraged and feeling that America's leaders had concluded that "it must be two worlds, and that war is inevitable." Patton's comments incorporated segments from a North Dakota Farmers Union resolution criticizing the United States for the "reckless abandonment of U.N.R.R.A." and for the "ill-considered attempts . . . to bolster the militaristic regimes of Greece and Turkey." The North Dakota resolution repeated the request for American acquiescence in E.C.E. administration of European recovery, arguing that

³⁴Jim Patton letter to "Dear Co-Workers," September 12, 1947, Stover Papers; National Union Farmer, December, 1947, p. 2. The American official who reportedly made the "gravy train" comment was Assistant Secretary of State William L. Clayton. Details and commentary on the demise of U.N.R.R.A. can be found in Nation CLXIII (August 10, 1946), pp. 144-145, and Nation CLXII (March 30, 1946), pp. 361-362; Archie Wright to Harold B. Johnson, April 13, 1948, Box 3, Folder "Watertown Daily Times 1941-1956," New York Milk Shed Records.

adoption of the proposal would "go far toward assuring the world, and Russia in particular, that the United States does not contemplate a modern Roman imperialism." Patton elaborated on his organization's belief that military, strategic, and defensive considerations should play no part in the recovery program, and that any American attempt "to dictate to participating countries what form of government they support" similarly had no place in a program whose only aims should be "restoring the economic foundations of peace and prosperity" and reviving "the spirit of San Francisco."³⁵

Perhaps recognizing the reluctance of Congress to shift completely toward E.C.E.-sponsored European recovery, Patton told the Senate committee that the National Farmers Union would be willing to accept, as an alternative, a bill presented by Chairman Charles Eaton of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. That bill, H.R. 4840, called for close cooperation with U.N. agencies and seemed to Patton to take "very seriously the sincere protests of those of us who really want the United Nations to succeed." Perhaps most importantly, H.R. 4840 also contained provisions for

³⁵James G. Patton to Board of Directors, National Farmers Union, September 4, 1947, Box 35, Folder "Farmers Union Correspondence 1947," Williams Papers; Testimony of Jim Patton, January 26, 1948, European Recovery Program, pp. 927-933; National Union Farmer, February, 1948, pp. 5 and 8.

a repayment plan that did not take advantage of European nations incapable of the "payment of full consideration" called for in a second bill proposed by Massachusetts representative Christian A. Herter. Herter's bill, H.R. 4579, struck Patton as a way of draining poorer nations and making them too dependent on the support of the United States. "Since, in general," Patton informed the Senators:

the poorer the country the greater the aid, following [Herter's] repayment idea would mean that the greater the aid, the greater the American mortgage on a country's currency and economy. If this isn't imperialism, I don't know the meaning of the word.³⁶

Throughout the debate over the Marshall Plan, Jim Patton had grown increasingly discouraged over the future of the United Nations. The dissolution of U.N.R.R.A., the tendency, as Patton saw it, of the World Bank and of the International Monetary Fund to act as private bankers with an eye on commercial profit rather than to act in the financial interests of needy nations, and the American unwillingness either to adequately fund or to consistently support U.N.-sponsored programs led him to wonder whether the U.N. would meet the fate of the earlier League of Nations. Speaking in Colorado Springs in late 1947, Patton had charged that his beloved U.N. had become "nothing more than a debating society." His prescription for

³⁶Testimony of Jim Patton, January 26, 1948, European Recovery Program, pp. 927-933.

correcting this trend mirrored the argument presented earlier in One World or None. The United States, he said:

should give leadership in securing amendment of the United Nations Charter to create a limited world government, with sovereign power and police force to make universal national disarmament possible.³⁷

Patton repeated his gloomy assessment of the U.N.'s future and called once again for expanded U.N. powers when he addressed the annual convention of the National Farmers Union two months after his Senate testimony. Reminding the delegates that the United States was not the only nation in the world and that Americans were not "God's chosen children," Patton argued that the policies of the Truman administration would lead to "war and suppression, not peace and democracy." In a similarly charged speech, North Dakota Farmers Union president Glenn Talbott once again compared Truman's policies to those of Nazi Germany and declared that administration advocates "were deliberately fostering a red scare to create a smoke screen behind which their true aims could be hidden." Convention delegates openly criticized the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan by approving a resolution that opposed "the practice of any country, including our own, of using food or any other form of aid as a means of controlling the internal politics of another country." It ended with the comment that the

³⁷James G. Patton Remarks at Social Action Luncheon in Colorado Springs, "October 22, 1947, Folder "1947-1948," Patton Archives.

National Farmers Union was also "opposed to the using of aid funds for military purposes."³⁸

Two editorials in the April, 1948, issue of the National Union Farmer summarized the position of the Farmers Union on the state of U.S. foreign policy. Presenting what has come to be known as a "contrived crisis" scenario, the editors pointed out that, "One crisis after another is being created to get us to accept policies that thinking, unfrightened people wouldn't even listen to." The Marshall Plan, "little more than an expanded Truman Doctrine," relied more on military aid than on economic assistance and contributed billions of dollars to nations such as Iceland, Portugal, and Turkey that had not even fought in the war and to nations such as Portugal, Turkey, and Greece that were ruled by "iron-fisted tyrants." The editorials pointed out that the U.S. Congress on one day criticized the "inefficiency [and] corruption" of the Chinese government and then almost immediately gave that nation \$463 million in aid. Asking "What Kind of a Policy Is This" that caused the United States to lose "more prestige in the last two years than Franklin Roosevelt was able to build up in 14 years," the Farmers Union paper announced that the Truman administration had the nation, and the

³⁸"Report of James G. Patton to NFU Convention, Denver, Colorado," March 9, 1948, Box 11, File Folder #12, James G. Patton Papers, University of Colorado, Boulder; National Union Farmer, March, 1948, pp. 1, 13, 4a-7a.

world, "on the road to war."³⁹

In addition to disagreements with the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, Farmers Union leaders also opposed administration efforts to move toward Universal Military Training and the establishment of a peace-time draft. Following six months of hearings, a nine-member Presidential Advisory Commission on Universal Training in June, 1947, issued a 448-page report that presented universal training as a matter of "urgent military necessity." The panel included General Electric president Charles Wilson, former ambassador to the Soviet Union Joseph Davies, former Roosevelt advisor Sam Rosenman, manpower expert Anna Rosenberg, physicist and M.I.T. president Karl Compton, editor of the Christian Herald Reverend Daniel Poling, Georgetown University geopolitical expert Reverend Edmund Walsh, Princeton University president Harold Dodds, and black attorney Truman Gibson, Jr. Collectively they predicted that the United States could lose its monopoly on atomic weapons as early as 1951, and that a Soviet attack could be anticipated by 1955. In order to guard against the "indescribable horror" of a third world war, the committee called for an annual outlay of

³⁹National Union Farmer, April, 1948, p. 8. A March, 1948, Patton telegram to President Truman had expressed the similar fear that policy was being determined "by creating one crisis after another." (Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," March 29, 1948, p. 3.)

\$1.75 billion to buttress America's military forces. "To do less," they concluded, was "to gamble with our lives and liberties."⁴⁰

The following month Jim Patton joined former Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels, Colorado Senator Edwin C. Johnson, and seventeen educators and religious leaders in an analysis of the report. Their commentary opened with the powerfully enunciated argument that enactment into law of a universal military training program "would drastically change the character of our democracy and virtually destroy the chances of preventing a third World War." It continued in an eloquently worded rebuttal of the commission's findings that criticized the government's lip service to the United Nations, its "trite and unbelievably childish oversimplification of history" in arguing that "a nation can survive only if it is huge and militarily powerful," and its emphasis on "nationalism instead of internationalism." After describing the government program as indicative of "the bankruptcy of statesmanship," Patton and his colleagues offered as an alternative universal disarmament, a strengthened United Nations, and a program of relief and reconstruction that included the Soviet Union as a recipient nation.⁴¹

Six months later, Patton sent a message to Farmers Union locals in

⁴⁰Newsweek, XXIX (June 9, 1947), pp. 24 and 27; Time XLIX (June 9, 1947), pp. 19-20.

⁴¹"An Analysis of the Report of the President's Advisory Commission on Universal Training, July 7, 1947," Stover Papers.

which he pointed out that adoption of the universal military training program would be a return to the ways of the Old World, ways that stressed "goose-stepping men in uniform." The National Farmers Union opposed the program because, Patton wrote, it would lead to more military control of the nation, it was an inappropriate way to prepare for war in an atomic age, its excessive cost would divert funds from greater needs such as hospitals and schools, it would lead to the destruction of the United Nations, and it would also lead to war. When Truman added a request for a peacetime draft in March of 1948, Patton also expressed disagreement, telegraphing the President with a request to "end our one-way street approach to international problems."⁴²

Patton biographer Charles Livermore has argued that in the aftermath of Truman's surprising 1948 win, "a more mature and power-conscious Patton shifted his priorities to a less naive level and set to work within the postwar reactionary environment" to fashion "excellent relations with the Truman administration." The result, he wrote, was an "immediate and firm" relationship between the Farmers Union and the post-1948 Truman Administration.⁴³ There was praise in the post-1948 period for the Point

⁴²National Union Farmer, January, 1948, pp. 1-2, and March, 1948, p. 1.

⁴³Livermore, "James G. Patton," pp. 149-150.

Four program, Truman's scheme for the sharing of technological and scientific knowledge with underdeveloped nations that Patton hoped would signal a trend toward American cooperation with the United Nations. But Farmers Union insistence on reduced military budgets and its rejection of the North Atlantic alliance make invalid any suggestion of harmony between the Farmers Union and the President. The months between Truman's defeat of Dewey and the beginning of the Korean War repeated the pattern in place since 1945, with Farmers Union criticism of Truman's foreign policy a constant. In a radio script prepared by the National Union Farmer and intended for widespread use on local stations, North Dakota's Glenn Talbott criticized the Marshall Plan as "amazingly work[ing] on the theory that starving people need guns instead of food." On the same program, President Patton spoke of the "inept and reactionary" Washington leadership. Fred Stover's Iowa Union Farmer, in a post-election editorial entitled "We Didn't Celebrate," anguished over John Foster Dulles' selection as head of the American delegation to the United Nations, a move that Stover believed put a halt to any hope for change in U.S. policies. Eloquently tying foreign and domestic policies together, the editorial argued that:

we cannot have a really liberal domestic program with a really higher standard of living while continuing our present reactionary militaristic foreign policy. We cannot have both guns and butter. As long as a large part of our total production and manpower and a major part of our federal budget is used for military purposes at home and

abroad, we cannot have an abundance of civilian goods and a rising standard of living at home.⁴⁴

The criticism continued in early 1949 with Jim Patton's call for the dismissal of Secretary of Defense James Forrestal and a reduction in the military budget of fifty percent. Forrestal's first annual report, Patton said, revealed the Secretary's desire to expand the powers of the military. Suggesting that the United States remove itself from "the interstellar pipings of Mr. Forrestal along the path of ever heavier military burdens," Patton called for a redistribution of funds to benefit "production and services needed in the civilian economy."⁴⁵

Forrestal's fate was overshadowed in the early months of the new year by Farmers Union opposition to President Truman's decision to create a North Atlantic alliance. Reaction in Iowa was swift, as Fred Stover critiqued the pact as a "North Atlantic Deception" that had "little to do with the defense of our country." The alliance, Stover wrote, had been "formed with the deliberate intention of undermining the U.N.," and as an extension of Truman's containment policies contributed to an unnecessary and expensive

⁴⁴Iowa Union Farmer, November 20, 1948, p. 4; "National Union Farmer Broadcast Script for Radio Platter on Farm Prices, Organization, and Monopoly," with November 2, 1948 cover letter from William C. Vincent, Stover Papers.

⁴⁵National Union Farmer, January, 1949, pp. 1 and 7.

series of thrusts and counterthrusts by the United States and the Soviet Union. Earlier American aid to Greece and Turkey had led, said Stover, to the Soviet Union's 1948 "counter flanking movement" in Czechoslovakia, and this current attempt by the United States to establish military bases in Scandinavia would "practically force Russia to overrun Finland" and would lead to Russia "taking strong measures to strengthen her position by absorbing the satellite states into the Soviet system." Noting the "considerable propaganda" in the American press over Soviet maneuvers in the Baltic Sea, Stover wondered why such actions so close to Russian territory should be more alarming than American naval maneuvers in the Mediterranean. To Stover, the United States was attempting to make a virtue of imperialism "by mixing some political philosophy of freedom with it." He angrily rejected such a combination, and condemned the North Atlantic Pact as an obligation that "mortgages our lives to war."⁴⁶

Stover's opposition to the Atlantic Pact was mirrored in other states and in the actions of the National Farmers Union in Denver. The national board of directors unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the pact as a "futile gesture . . . directly contrary to American precedent and history." Repeating what had been its most consistent theme since Truman's rise to

⁴⁶Iowa Union Farmer, March 19, 1949, p. 4, and April 16, 1949, p. 4; Fred Stover, undated handwritten notes entitled "The Crisis in the Farmers Union," Stover Papers.

power, the board expressed the view that regional defense agreements such as N.A.T.O. further weakened the United Nations. The pact was described as "the most alarming" of "certain very disturbing elements" that continued to plague an administration foreign policy unnecessarily influenced by the American military.⁴⁷

The one clear exception to Farmers Union displeasure with Truman's foreign policy was its praise for Point Four. "Your proposals," Patton wrote Truman in January of 1949:

for taking American 'know-how' into the underdeveloped regions of the earth have sent a thrill of hope through millions of Americans. Amid the festering fears of new war that have marked the years since war's end, your call for positive action to shape a better world has come like a proverbial breath of fresh air.⁴⁸

Yet even this high praise was tempered by Patton's fear that the new program might go the way of previous American efforts and become another

⁴⁷National Union Farmer, April, 1949, pp. 1 and 7; May 24, 1949 Resolution of Savo Farmers Union Local No. 822 (Frederick, South Dakota), with accompanying June 2, 1949, letter from Don C. Matchan, Stover Papers; Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," March 28, 1949, p. 2; Department of State, "Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," January 24, 1951, p. 6. In their opposition to regional defense agreements, Farmers Union officials showed no awareness of Article 51 of the U.N. charter that allowed for such arrangements. The presumption is that they would have viewed the provision as contradictory to the true spirit of internationalism.

⁴⁸James G. Patton to Harry S. Truman, January 31, 1949, 800.50 TA/1-3149, Box 4159, Record Group 59.

unilateral crusade. He strongly warned Truman against such a possibility and urged him instead to take great pains to operate Point Four through the United Nations. Concerned that the program would be implemented by unilateral "treaties between the United States and each of the countries where American technicians and capital are to assist in development," Patton asked the President to "reverse this trend" and to follow a policy of "enlightened self-interest" in which the United States "function[ed] as one among the company of nations . . . on a basis of equality not of dominance."⁴⁹

Patton's desire to see the United States adopt a policy of equality over one of dominance went unfulfilled, and by the end of 1949, the Farmers Union president was still criticizing Truman's dealings with the rest of the world. In a statement presented to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in October, he noted that "a negative policy of merely trying to stop the spread of communism will [not] lead to peace," and that such actions as the Atlantic Pact "would merely serve to freeze the present cleavages and make them more difficult to heal."⁵⁰ In the same month, the South Dakota

⁴⁹James G. Patton to Harry S. Truman, January 31, 1949, 800.50 TA/1-3149, Box 4159, Record Group 59.

⁵⁰Statement of James G. Patton, October 12, 1949, U.S. Congress, House, 81st Congress, 1st Session, To Seek Development of the United Nations Into a World Federation: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, pp. 15-16.

Farmers Union adopted a platform that read:

The foreign policy of the United States has gone from bad to worse. We cannot have freedom at home while we enslave people abroad. Since our last National Convention, our government has continued its unilateral political and economic action in the Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, North Atlantic Military Pact and the Rearming of Europe. We feel that each of these actions is bringing us closer to war and not near to peace.⁵¹

The most explicit, and most colorful, denunciation of U.S. foreign policy came that same October from Iowa's Fred Stover. In an address to the Iowa Farmers Union, Stover excoriated the "intellectual pigmies, who are masterminding our world policy," and whose "pretended patriotism" had U.S. citizens "dazzled by the halo of national self-righteousness."⁵²

The Farmers Union assault on U.S. foreign policy continued at the 1950 national convention in Denver where delegates approved a program that reiterated support for the U.N. and called for "abandonment of unilateral activity in world affairs." The introduction of "A Statement from America's Family Farmers to the President of the United States" opposing atomic escalation highlighted a convention that rejected the inevitability of war and named peace as the "overriding necessity" of the day.⁵³

⁵¹"Excerpts from the South Dakota Farmers Union platform adopted October 1949," Folder #555, Official File, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

⁵²"Excerpts from Convention Address of Fred Stover, Iowa F.U. Ch., October 1949," Folder #555, President Truman's Officials Files.

⁵³National Union Farmer, March, 1950, pp. 8-9 and 16.

In the aftermath of the convention, the Iowa Union Farmer quoted Albert Einstein as placing responsibility on the United States for the "present hysteria and international tension." The scientist's rejection of the "Great Illusion" that the United States, because of its "unlimited strength," could impose its own brand of peace on the world led to a call from the Iowa paper for "a new approach to Russia" and a reversion to the policies of Franklin Roosevelt. Raymond Fosdick, a State Department consultant on Far Eastern policy and president of the Rockefeller Foundation, also identified with the Farmers Union position with his appeal for U.S. identification with world revolution. In an article he wrote for the New York Times Magazine in February of 1950, Fosdick called it a "tragic misconception" to blame Communism for the widespread unrest against hunger and disease, and wrote that, "Those who talk of arms and a display of power as the principal counters in the game misunderstand what the game is about." Making the same charge was Chicago journalist Keyes Beech, who in May filed a report from Asia in which he noted that, "Democracy to most Asiatics is a mouthful of words." Fred Stover's pleasure at finding allies in the scientific, governmental, and journalistic worlds was underscored by his personal distribution of a hundred copies of Fosdick's commentary.⁵⁴

⁵⁴Iowa Union Farmer, March 18, 1950, p.4 and June 17, 1950, p. 4;

Invited to address the Australian Peace Congress held in Melbourne in April, 1950, Fred Stover gave what he later called his best speech ever when he addressed the main convention on April 19. A clear and powerful compilation of the many ideas Stover had been developing throughout the early years of the Cold War, the speech accused U.S. policymakers of assuming "stainless moral perfection" and of believing that "under their leadership America can do no wrong." Returning from Australia, Stover was skeptical about the chances for world peace. President Truman's May, 1950, comment that he would not hesitate once again to use the atomic bomb, Herbert Hoover's call for a United Nations without Russia, and Dean Acheson's attempt, as Stover saw it, to "put a democratic label on the resurrected Nazis in Germany" led to Stover's glum assessment that "things are going to get worse . . . before they get better."⁵⁵

Raymond B. Fosdick, "We Must Identify Ourselves with World Revolution," February 12, 1950 article in the New York Times Magazine, reprinted March 18, 1950 by the ACLU's The Open Forum, copy of which, with Stover comments, is in Stover Papers; Keyes Beech, "Why Are We Losing Asia to Reds?," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 6, 1950, copy with Stover comments in Stover Papers.

⁵⁵Iowa Union Farmer, March 18, 1950, p. 4; U.S. Farmers Association, Biographical Sketch of Fred Stover (Hampton, Iowa, 1985), p. 30; F.W. Stover to Mrs. Elizabeth Moos, May 4, 1950, Stover Papers; Address of F.W. Stover to Australian Peace Congress, Melbourne, Australia, April 19, 1950, Stover Papers; Mrs. Jessie M. Street to Fred Stover, April 21, 1950, Stover Papers; Fred Stover to Mrs. Jessie M. Street, May 12, 1950, Stover Papers.

While Stover was travelling to and from Australia, Jim Patton was sailing for Europe as part of an Economic Cooperation Administration survey of agricultural conditions in England, Greece, Italy, and Germany. After completing that assignment, Patton was joined by eight other National Farmers Union leaders in Sweden for a meeting of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers. He was impressed with the progress evident since the close of World War Two, and he surprisingly praised some of the work of the Marshall Plan, particularly its efforts in Greece. Patton was not as comfortable with the situation in Germany, however, and he expressed a fear over "definite signs of the revival of nationalism" in that nation. Mostly, however, his trip to Europe reinforced his belief that the United States needed to make significant changes in the way that it dealt with the rest of the world. Writing from Europe, Patton commented that:

The heavy feeling I have in my heart is that my dear, beloved America is going down the same tragic road of monopoly, militarism, fear, distrust and hate. It is SO unnecessary, it is so negative, and it is so immoral and destructive.⁵⁶

Jim Patton's critique was typical of the consistent assault on administration foreign policy that the National Farmers Union maintained through the first five years of Harry Truman's presidency. The

⁵⁶Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," July 31, 1950, p. 1; Department of State, "Attitudes of Farmer Organizations," January 24, 1951, p. 9; National Union Farmer, May, 1950, p. 3; Eastern Union Farmer, July-August, 1950, p. 3;

organization's argument was as simple as it was direct: the United States had failed to live up to its pronouncements of international cooperation and had sought instead to by-pass the newly created United Nations to selfishly shape the world in its own unilaterally dictated fashion. The approach included a rejection of the cooperative spirit exhibited by the Allies in the years of World War II, a pre-occupation with strategic and defense concerns, a betrayal of traditional American support for national self-determination through support for un-democratic regimes, and the contriving of one crisis after another to justify American action in place of what was said to be an inadequately prepared United Nations. The dangers inherent in the Truman administration scheme were that the United States would lose credibility with much of the world, might even earn for itself the hatred of many of the world's people, would interfere with the re-establishment of economic ties between western and eastern Europe, and would squander American dollars on containment of a supposed communist threat while ignoring much needed social programs at home.

Truman administration actions often justified the criticisms of the Farmers Union. The President's dismissal of Henry Wallace indicated a clear rejection of a world view emphasizing mutual cooperation with the Soviets, reduced military expenditures, and a prominent role for the United Nations

in the control of atomic technology. Administration reluctance to fully support the efforts of U.N.R.R.A., F.A.O., and the E.C.E., the declaration of a Truman Doctrine that announced American intentions to intervene in areas where the United States deemed it necessary, the development of the Marshall Plan as an American-run project for European recovery, the push for a program of universal military training, and the sponsorship of regional defense alliances all marked a clear preference for a unilateral American approach to world affairs.

Chapter 3

Stepchildren and the Unholy Alliance

National Farmers Union dissent from post-war American unilateralism reflected the organization's devotion to the policies and memory of Franklin Roosevelt. Jim Patton and the 500,000 members of the Farmers Union had been enthused by the former President's promise of international cooperation exhibited from the Atlantic Charter through his final conference appearance at Yalta. This dedication to the principle of internationalism made it difficult for the Farmers Union to accept what they perceived as the policy reversals of President Harry Truman following Roosevelt's death in 1945. The new President was judged by the Union as drifting away from international cooperation as the guiding light of American foreign policy and as adhering instead to unilateral American self-interest. These changes were rejected as contrary not only to the memory of Franklin Roosevelt but to the tradition of American democracy.

Yet there was more than principle involved in the repudiation of Harry Truman's foreign policy. There was also the question of survival. Carrying a

lengthy memory of unsuccessful agrarian efforts to attain equality in American society, and believing that events at home and events abroad were irrefutably linked, the Farmers Union criticized President Truman's international policies for contributing to the long-established consignment of America's farmers to second-class citizenship. The Farmers Union position was based on three premises: (1) that agriculture was, as the Northeastern Union Farmer described it, the "step child of the American economy;"¹ (2) that within agriculture small family farms were being victimized by the efforts of the nation's largest farmers to drive them out of business; and (3) that the attempts by corporate agriculture to eliminate small farms was part of an "unholy alliance"² between business and government created not only to dominate the domestic economy but to expand American power abroad by controlling the resources of the world. Despite President Truman's publicly expressed support for agriculture, his focus on containing the threat of communist expansion was seen as contributing to the demise of America's family farms.

The Farmers Union's contention that agriculture was at the bottom of the nation's economic pecking order was a fact periodically reinforced by the

¹Northeastern Union Farmer, December, 1952, p. 7.

²National Union Farmer, March, 1948, p. 4a; 1950 Iowa Farmers Union Resolutions, Stover Papers

release of any number of government statistics. Although farmers, like most other segments of American society, had benefitted economically from U.S. involvement in World War II, and although agrarian prosperity carried over into the early post-war years, by 1948 the American farmer was anything but the "enviable individual" Fortune magazine erroneously described him as in June, 1949.³ At a time when industrial wages, corporate profits, and government spending were all on the rise, the only thing increasing for the farmer was his mortgage debt level. Agricultural income dropped precipitously from the post-war high of \$17.8 billion in 1947 to \$13.0 billion in 1950, and average annual farm income declined from \$3,500 to just over \$2,700.⁴

In an attempt to improve their financial stability, many farmers sought part-time employment off the farm. In fact, the number of farm operators working off their farms for more than 100 days per year increased by nearly 200,000 between 1944 and 1949.⁵ Other farmers found more ingenious ways to improve their family incomes. Faced with the prospects of either

³"Those Prosperous Farmers," Fortune XXXIX (June, 1949), pp. 64-68.

⁴Agricultural statistics cited in Congressional Quarterly Service, Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964: A Review of Government and Politics in the Postwar Years (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965), p. 669, and in Samuel Lubell, Revolt of the Moderates (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 169.

⁵Facts for Farmers, July, 1952, p. 2.

plowing their crops under or having them die in the fields, a group of Farmers Union members in New Jersey chose instead to take four hundred crates of produce directly to the factory gates. Selling their products at anywhere from 33 to 50 percent below retail, these Farmers Union members increased their profits from 20 to 40 percent.⁶

Despite the decline in farmer income and the variety of alternative methods farmers pursued to improve their lot, many consumers took for granted that agrarian greed was responsible for increased food prices. Farmers, though, pocketed very little of the money spent in the marketplace. Their share of the consumer's food dollar dropped from 54 cents in 1945 to 46 cents by June, 1950. Bureau of Agricultural Economics statistics revealed that even if farmers charged nothing for their crops, consumers still would be stuck with high prices. That the retail price of bread increased in 1948 at a time when the farm price of wheat had fallen suggested that charges of greed would best be directed not toward the nation's farmers but toward processors and other middlemen. It was the "greed and avarice of the food distributors of the nation," North Dakota

⁶Statement of Ed Yeomans, October 3, 1947, U.S. Congress, Senate, 80th Congress, Prices of Consumers Goods: Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on the Economic Report, pp. 3608-3651, in Box 3, Volume 16, Record Group 128, National Archives; Statement of Glenn Talbott, October 8, 1947, Prices of Consumers Goods, pp. 1964-2014, in Box 6, Volume 9, Record Group 128.

Senator Usher Burdick argued, that was the prime cause of high prices.⁷

Not only did farmers not rake in huge profits, but they also suffered as consumers themselves. An eight percent drop in farm income from 1949 to 1950 was made even worse by a corresponding six percent rise in agricultural production expenses. Prices received by farmers consistently lagged behind prices paid by farmers, resulting in an overall decline in purchasing power. North Dakota farmers alone lost more than \$200 million in purchasing power from 1948 to 1949, while farmers in the five states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Montana, and the two Dakotas together lost more than one billion dollars.⁸ Added to the host of other statistical evidence, this decline reinforces the contention that America's farmers were indeed the stepchildren of the economy.

Evidence also supports the Farmers Union premise that the largest of

⁷Iowa Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 8; Facts for Farmers, October, 1950, p. 3; James G. Patton and Angus McDonald, "The Monopoly Squeeze," Farm Policy Forum, IV (January, 1951), p. 31; Usher Burdick to Herb Hester, August 21, 1950, Box 23, Folder 4, Usher L. Burdick Papers, University of North Dakota. For one Congressman's discussion of the misguided consumer charges of agrarian greed, see Address of the Honorable Albert Gore, Chicago, Illinois, December 14, 1949, Box 4, Jackson Papers.

⁸The Agricultural Situation, March, 1951, p. 2; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Statistics, 1960 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 441; "Annual Report of Glenn J. Talbott, President," November 15, 1950, Folder #555, President Truman's Official Files.

America's agricultural concerns actively sought to drive the bulk of the nation's family farmers out of business. After peaking in 1935 at 6.8 million, the number of farms in the United States steadily declined to just over six million in 1940 and then to 5.3 million by 1950. A study of twenty-four Farmers Union states showed a net loss of over 209,000 farms in the five year period from 1945 to 1950. Eight of the states lost more than ten thousand farms, and three of them declined by twenty thousand or more. After making up 23.2 percent of the American population on the eve of World War Two, American farmers declined to only 16.6 percent of the population a decade later.⁹

The farms remaining in this shrinking environment represented what one farm journal called "the polarization of American agriculture," and what Jim Patton saw as an alarming trend toward "factories in the fields."¹⁰ Between 1940 and 1950, farms of less than 180 acres declined by fifteen percent while farms of 500 acres or more increased by eleven percent. The

⁹The Agricultural Situation, November, 1951, p. 4; Iowa Union Farmer, February, 1951, p. 7; Wayne D. Rasmussen, ed., Agriculture in the United States: A Documentary History, Volume 4 (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 2917; Victor K. Heyman, "The National Farmers Union in its Political World: A Case Study in Influence and the Factors of Influence Potential," PhD dissertation (Washington University, 1957), p. 22; "This Is What's Happening to American Agriculture," Box 5, Folder "Minutes, June 1945-December 1953," U.S. Farmers Association Records, University of Iowa.

¹⁰Facts for Farmers, July, 1952, p. 2; Patton, "Again the Call is for Pioneers," pp. 9-10.

average farm grew from 174 acres to 210 acres. But while the trend was toward larger agricultural units, the vast majority of American farms remained small family ventures. Over three-fourths of the nation's 5.3 million farms consisted of less than 180 acres, and nearly three-fourths of these contained less than 100 acres.¹¹

America's small farmers were not being physically removed from the land, but they were falling farther and farther behind their corporate counterparts in the race for economic stability. By 1950, the largest 1.8 percent of America's farms averaged a net income of over \$16,600, while fully 71 percent earned an annual income of \$1,031 or less. When U.S. News and World Report highlighted the "typical Kansas wheat farmer" as having a net income of \$11,350, it may have been typical for Kansas but it was certainly misleading for the nation as a whole.¹²

As small family farms walked the edge of poverty, some observers suggested that the poorest among them should seek other means of making a living. Speaking in defense of urban residents facing escalating grocery

¹¹Facts for Farmers, July, 1952, p. 2; Samuel Lubell highlighted the division of American farmers into "haves" and "have nots" in "Divided We Plow," chapter seven of his Revolt of the Moderates, pp. 154-175. The same theme was carried through all of Grant McConnell, The Decline of American Democracy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953).

¹²Iowa Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 8; "Farm Profits: Another Good Year," U.S. News and World Report XXV (December 10, 1948), pp. 22-23.

prices, Henry Luce's Life magazine in 1947 pointed the finger of blame at the "3,800,000 marginal or submarginal" farmers whose "ignorance, indigence, bad luck, bad health or poverty" had led to government assistance and had therefore contributed to higher consumer costs. Life's proposed solution, mirroring a U.S. Chamber of Commerce report of 1945, was to encourage this marginal farm population to move to the cities where they could work in more productive industrial pursuits. The business of American agriculture would then be left in the hands of the two million farmers whose supposedly more efficient techniques accounted for 85% of U.S. commercial production. Sensing that "Jeffersonian idealists and urban sociologists" would oppose the plan for its repudiation of the family farm as "a prolific breeding ground for staunch citizenry," Life reminded its readers that rural America had also produced the likes of John Dillinger and "Pretty Boy" Floyd.¹³ The caustic comment reflected not only the views of Luce, but also the attitude of America's increasing number of corporate agribusinesses for whom Jefferson's agrarian ideal was a thing of the past.

On the third contention of the Farmers Union, that the demise of the

¹³"The Farmer: He Is a Dual Personality and Our Farm Policy Should Recognize That Fact," Life XXII (May 5, 1947), p. 34. The Chamber of Commerce study, entitled "Variations in Farm Income and Their Relations to Agricultural Policies," was cited in Fred Stover, Peace and Parity (Des Moines: Iowa Union Farmer Association, 1953), p. 4.

small farmer was caused in part by an "unholy alliance" between business and government, the preponderance of evidence suggests that the Farmers Union charge resembled more fact than fiction. There is no proof of a planned conspiracy against agriculture between government and business. But the Truman administration's preoccupation with containment and its eagerness to enlist corporate America in the struggle against Communism relegated both domestic concerns and the non-corporate community to the back burner of American priorities. For an impoverished segment of society that long had been struggling for economic equality, these were ominous trends.

Like the Populists, their ideological ancestors of an earlier century, National Farmers Union leaders advocated government action as a corrective to social and economic inequality. The organization had therefore hailed such New Deal programs as the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the Farm Security Administration and had been encouraged by the imposition of government price controls during World War II. Jim Patton and various state leaders had also welcomed the government's wartime promise that increased agricultural production to win the war would be rewarded by guarantees that farmer "productive capacities would be protected after the

war was over." Acting on this promise, American farmers had expanded production by one-third, allowing the nation to increase its agricultural exports and the American consumer to eat better than he had in years.¹⁴

With the end of World War II, however, the promise of government assistance to agriculture was forgotten. Price controls were abandoned after a bitter struggle between the Agriculture Department and the Office of Price Administration.¹⁵ The removal of controls widened the gap between farmer costs and income and led the Farmers Union to seek economic relief through increased agricultural parity payments. Incorporated as a potential tool for economic restructuring in the 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act, parity was a concept through which agricultural prices were set at such a level as to allow farmers to maintain the same relative economic status they had experienced in the base period of 1910-1914. A parity figure of 100% meant that a farmer's costs and income would in theory allow him to provide for his family in the same manner as in the earlier period.¹⁶

¹⁴Iowa Union Farmer, October 12, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁵Details of the fight will be found in Barton Bernstein, "Clash of Interests: The Postwar Battle Between the Office of Price Administration and the Department of Agriculture," Agricultural History XLI (January, 1967), pp. 45-57.

¹⁶U.S. Congress, Senate, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, May 13, 1952, Parity Handbook: A Reference Manual on Parity Price, Index of Prices Paid by Farmers, and Index of Prices Received, p. 2.

Parity payments were passionately opposed by certain segments of the American population. Fortune magazine labelled the concept an "outrage." Ladd Haystead, who wrote an occasional farm column for Fortune, doubted the need for any farm program at all. "Do my eyes deceive me," he wrote:

when I see outside of even the smallest farm town a big sign directing me to the local Cadillac dealer? Or am I deceived again when I come upon a consolidated school whose parking lot is filled with Oldsmobile convertibles? Pop has the Cadillac, Junior has the Oldsmobile, and my heart bleeds for the downtrodden farmer.

The Omaha World-Herald went so far as to question the loyalty of farmers seeking government payments. Calling on Congress to abolish price support programs altogether, the paper asked farmers to "put patriotism ahead of hand-out-ism." This viewpoint was taken to an added extreme by Don Paarlberg, a future Eisenhower appointee, who referred to parity programs as coming in "various shades of pink." The Detroit News graphically summarized opposition sentiment when it published a cartoon depicting the government bowing down to the interests of the farmers.¹⁷

Partly in response to consumer complaints that guaranteed prices for farmers caused higher food costs, Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan

¹⁷Fortune magazine was quoted in North Dakota Union Farmer, April 16, 1951, p. 1, while the Omaha World-Herald was quoted in Rocky Mountain Union Farmer, January, 1951, p. 2; Haystead, "4th Semi-Annual Agricultural Report" p. 14; Don Paarlberg, "It's Time for a New Look at Parity," Successful Farming (September, 1951), p. 126; Detroit News, March 15, 1951, p. 36.

in 1949 introduced what came to be known as the Brannan Plan. It called for agricultural prices to seek their own levels in the marketplace, which in the surplus situation then in existence meant lower prices for consumers. But whenever prices fell below what was judged to be a fair return for the farmers, the government would make up the difference between that price and what had been received in the marketplace. To prevent corporate farms from being the chief beneficiaries of the program, a provision was included that prevented payments to farms producing above a certain limit.¹⁸



Opposition to the Brannan Plan was as severe as it had been to the

¹⁸Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 263-268.

concept of parity. Farm groups representing the nation's largest farmers naturally protested their exclusion from the program, but Indiana Representative Cecil Harden uttered the most frequently heard criticism when she condemned the plan as part of a trend toward "state socialism." Fortune expressed the same concern, but was also angered that the program had "utterly perverted" the idea of government assistance "from a valid idea to protect the farmer from adversity to the demagogic and wholly ruinous idea of maintaining an extraordinary level of prosperity, no matter what the bill to the rest of the country."¹⁹

In defending Farmers Union requests for government involvement in the economy, Jim Patton stood Fortune's argument on its head. Far from benefitting America's farmers, the nation's economic policies, he charged, had in fact favored big business. Ever since the defeat of the Populists and the Non-Partisan League by the "far-flung and better organized divisions of monopoly," corporate America had imposed on the nation "an economy of artificial scarcity maintained to create an artificial price to secure a predetermined profit." Billed as a system of "free enterprise," it was, in Patton's view, "neither a system nor free," but merely a "shibboleth paraded

¹⁹Undated Terre Haute speech by Cecil Harden, Box 8, Folder 7, Cecil Harden Papers, Indiana Historical Society; "Those Prosperous Farmers," p. 68.

through the slick-paper magazine advertisements of giant corporations seeking freedom for exploitation."²⁰

This "free" enterprise system had a profound effect on small farmers. According to its proponents, including leading figures in both the Farm Bureau and the Grange, agricultural products, like all other items, would locate their fair prices in a market regulated by the law of supply and demand. Jim Patton disagreed. Convinced that, "While men are made by God, markets and other institutions are made by men," he rejected the premise of "an automatically operating free market system." Markets are "free," Patton said, "only within a framework of laws, property rights, wealth distribution, trade practices and other rules of the game" and were subject also "to certain patterns of market power distribution." In other words, men made the rules, and powerful men made rules advantageous to themselves. Large businesses, with "access to corporate finance, decreasing cost schedules, . . . and other means of conducting privately-managed price support and market allocation programs," were at a clear advantage. So, too, were the growing number of corporate farms whose use of

²⁰National Union Farmer, October 1, 1946, p. 3; Patton, "Again the Call is for Pioneers," p. 7; James G. Patton, "Agriculture Must Serve Mankind," an address by James G. Patton Before the National Farm Institute, Des Moines, Iowa, February 16, 1946, Stover Papers, p. 2; Patton, "The Federal Government's Role in the Postwar Economy," pp. 1126-1127.

"monopolistic pricing policies" enabled them "to extort from consumers and the rest of the market exorbitant sums for food and fiber." But for America's four million independent small agrarian producers, with none of the advantages of corporate size and power, the laws of supply and demand were, as Patton exclaimed in 1948, "a joke."²¹

The American economy, Fred Stover had argued as early as 1937, was crippled by its acceptance of two mistaken assumptions: that "if big business prospers all will prosper" and that "government regulation will cause us to lose our economic freedom." Adoption of these Coolidge-like tenets of laissez-faire capitalism had created what Jim Patton termed an "economy of scarcity" in which the nation's resources were controlled by a handful of corporations. By arbitrarily adjusting production levels, these industrial giants were able to maximize profits even in periods when the rest of society was struggling for economic survival. Profit figures for any number of American corporations, which Farmers Union newspapers and other agricultural journals habitually published, confirmed the argument.²²

²¹James G. Patton, "Implications of Agricultural Imports and Exports to U.S. Farm Policies," Statement before the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, April 21, 1953, pp. 3-4, Stover Papers; Testimony of James G. Patton, April 16, 1952, Farm Price Supports and Production Goals, p. 102; National Union Farmer, March, 1948, p. 6A.

²²F.W. Stover, "What Kind of a Future Farm Program Do We Want?," radio address, April 15, 1937, Stover Papers. Increasing corporate profits were reported in a host of agricultural publications, including Iowa Union Farmer,

For the bulk of America's farmers, this situation created what Jim Patton and Angus McDonald, who had joined the Farmers Union from the staff of the New Republic, termed a "monopoly squeeze." Farmers in need of equipment were forced to deal with the two companies that controlled "89 percent of all grain binders, 77 percent of all corn planters, 75 percent of all tractor-drawn cultivators, 68 percent of all tractors, 64 percent of hay loaders, and 61 percent of all tractor plows." When ready to market their goods, they encountered the same problem, for a handful of companies controlled distribution as well. Even if they were somehow able to bypass the distributors, as the Farmers Union members in New Jersey had done by selling directly to the consumer, they were still faced with the reality of purchasing "production and family needs in a protected scarcity market and sell[ing] their output in a freely competitive mass market over which they [had] no control."²³

For the nation's smallest farms, the squeeze took on an added dimension. Pressured by the government to increase production, but outmaneuvered by the cheaper costs of corporate agriculture, small farmers faced two

November 1950, p. 8, and May, 1951, p. 8, and in Facts for Farmers, October 1950, p.4.

²³Patton and McDonald, "The Monopoly Squeeze," pp. 30-31; Testimony of James G. Patton, April 16, 1952, Farm Price Supports and Production Goals, p. 103.

options: either maintain full production and accept the accompanying decline in profits, or reduce production and again accept lower profits. It was a no-win situation that in the opinion of the Farmers Union could only be remedied through government intervention.

To break the stranglehold of scarcity economics, Jim Patton proposed a "road of abundance" program that relied not only on a greater role by the government but also on full agricultural production. He denied that he was advocating socialism, arguing instead for a "mixed economy" somewhere between "the privately-administered monopoly-controlled 'free' market on the one hand, and government-sponsored scarcity practices on the other." The goal was to assure "a smoothly-functioning economy" that provided "an ever-increasing standard of living, not to just a few at the top, but to all our people." This, to Patton, was the true meaning of "free enterprise."²⁴

Patton's argument for full production was based on his belief that the government's approach and intensity during World War Two could be duplicated in time of peace. The leveling of mountains and remaking of islands that had contributed to victory in war could be paralleled by an

²⁴James G. Patton, "Implications of Agricultural Imports and Exports," p. 19; James G. Patton, "The Federal Government's Role in the Postwar Economy," pp. 1126-1127; National Union Farmer, October 15, 1945, p. 5, and March, 1948, p. 5A.

equally extensive exploitation of human energy to bring about advances in such programs as rural electrification, aid to education, and development of the nation's natural resources. For agriculture, such creativity would allow for minimum price supports and guaranteed minimum incomes, "incentive payments to shift agricultural production from surplus commodities to needed commodities," aid to disadvantaged farmers, and, perhaps most importantly, "pricing policies . . . aimed at moving agricultural products into the places needed." It would only succeed, however, if industry ceased restricting production "for the purpose of maintaining a predetermined price and profit." And it would only succeed if the government took an active, interventionist role in altering what Fred Stover said were "the economic conditions which breed discontent."²⁵

In April of 1944, the National Farmers Union had been belatedly invited to join the National Postwar Conference. Pioneered by the National Association of Manufacturers and originally consisting of sixteen "major social and economic groups," the conference had met earlier in the year to seek solutions to the "many serious problems which confront the nation. . . ." At the supposed urging of the Grange, the American Farm Bureau Federation,

²⁵James G. Patton, "Agriculture Must Serve Mankind," pp. 8-10; National Union Farmer, April 1, 1947, p. 1; Fred Stover, "What Kind of a Future Farm Program Do We Want?"

and the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, all of which had been among the original sixteen members, organization chairman Walter D. Fuller extended the membership invitation to Jim Patton in a letter that announced "complete equality on the part of each group in the proceedings."²⁶

Patton's response to Fuller was a succinct and bitter summary of the Farmers Union anxiety over the growing power of American business. In rejecting the invitation, the Farmers Union president accused the N.A.M.-initiated group of seeking "to mold policy apart from the constitutional, democratic processes." The predominance of groups representing "business and capital" and the relative absence of organizations serving the needs of labor and "real dirt farmers" committed the conference, Patton wrote, to "a conspiracy against the public interest." If successful in obtaining its goal, which Patton saw as the "domination of public policy," this "stacked private planning group" threatened to become a "super-government."²⁷

When Farmers Union leaders focused their criticisms on the domestic

²⁶Walter D. Fuller to James G. Patton, April 7, 1944, and James G. Patton to Walter D. Fuller, April 29, 1944, Stover Papers. In addition to the farm groups and the National Association of Manufacturers, the other original sixteen members included the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce, American Bankers Association, American Federation of Labor, American Legion, Association of American Railroads, Chamber of Commerce of the U.S.A., Committee for Economic Development, Congress of Industrial Organizations, Investment Bankers Association of America, Kiwanis International, National Foreign Trade Council, and Rotary International.

²⁷James G. Patton to Walter D. Fuller, April 29, 1944, Stover Papers.

aspects of scarcity economics, they rarely included President Truman on their lengthy list of notable villains. The names Morgan, Mellon, DuPont, Pew, Hoover, Dulles, and Forrestal were featured on a regular basis, particularly in the Iowa Union Farmer.²⁸ but the President generally escaped the organization's wrath. In fact, his announced support for the Brannan Plan and his pursuit of both full employment and abundant production drew applause from some organization spokesmen, including Gordon Roth, the public relations director for the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association.²⁹ Perhaps accepting corporate greed as an historical trend beyond the control of any one man, and grateful that in some respects Harry Truman's domestic Fair Deal mirrored the New Deal policies of Franklin Roosevelt, the Farmers Union levied only occasional attacks on the President's seeming failure to make government a more outspoken advocate for the needs of the small farmer.

When turning their attention to the relationship between scarcity economics and foreign policy, however, Farmers Union leaders openly rebuked the President. American dealings with the rest of the world, they

²⁸See, for example, Iowa Union Farmer, September 28, 1946, p. 1, and April 17, 1948, p. 1.

²⁹Gordon Roth, "Food for Freedom" radio address, January 13, 1946, p. 4, Stover Papers.

argued, were something that a U.S. President could directly influence. How he chose to position the United States in the international arena would impact significantly on American ties with other nations. More importantly, the President's stand in foreign affairs was also seen as establishing the moral tone for the nation's future. When Harry Truman reneged on wartime assurances that the United States could cooperate with the Soviet Union and chose instead to create what Glenn Talbott called "a blind, unreasoning fear of Russia and the Communists,"³⁰ he abandoned the high road of principle. By generating an atmosphere in which prevention of Soviet expansion became the overriding priority of the nation, and by encouraging overseas business expansion as one means of achieving that result, Harry Truman lost sight of the more noble goals of internationalism and unwittingly abetted what the Farmers Union condemned as the "unholy alliance" between government and business.

Disputing the Truman administration's contention that it was unselfishly assisting in the rebuilding of a war-torn world, the Farmers Union charged that the government was instead promoting the "rapacious imperialism of a privileged few."³¹ Just as Indiana Senator Albert Beveridge had vowed in

³⁰National Union Farmer, March, 1948, p. 1.

³¹Address of F.W. Stover to Australian Peace Congress, Melbourne, Australia, April 19, 1950, Stover Papers.

1898 that, "the trade of the world shall be ours,"³² and just as the National Bankers Association had in that same decade proposed "an imperialism of capital to govern the world,"³³ so now were government and business said to be teaming up to control the resources of the world. The benefits for business were, as Patton informed the Chicago Conference of Progressives in 1946, the "exorbitant profits found in foreign investments and exploitation of resources in countries with living standards lower than ours."³⁴ For the government the advantage lay in the deterrent to communist expansion provided by the spread of American interests abroad.

Such a program of postwar corporate imperialism had been frequently advocated during the course of the war. Virgil Jordan, the president of the National Industrial Conference Board, told an Investment Bankers Association convention in December of 1940 that in the aftermath of the conflict the United States would be embarking "on a career of imperialism in world affairs" that would take the nation "southward in our hemisphere and westward in the Pacific." Two months later, in presenting his case for an American Century, Henry Luce noted that in the decades after the war

³²Fred Stover, "Production, Ideas, and Wars: An Outline," undated article in Stover Papers, p. 8.

³³Fred Stover, The Contest Between the People and the Plunderers (Hampton, Iowa: U.S. Farmers Association, 1951), pp. 8-9.

³⁴National Union Farmer, October 1, 1946, p. 3.

"Asia . . . will be worth to us four, five, ten billions of dollars a year."³⁵

When the United States emerged from World War Two in a position of unparalleled strength, the call for empire continued. A March 2, 1947, article in the Chicago Journal of Commerce, written by Austin Kiplinger and entitled, "U.S. Must Accept New Role as Imperialist," argued that:

The United States can produce more than its present capacity to consume. . . . We sell the excess abroad. And since the rest of the world is not up to our standard of production, we must decide what to take in payment. We can let the deficit stand as a debt which will probably never be paid. Or--and this is where imperialism comes in--we can take ownership of properties throughout the world and help to run them.³⁶

Kiplinger's views bore a remarkable resemblance to Senator Beveridge's 1898 observation that, "American factories are making more than the people can use," and that therefore "American law, American order, American civilization, and the American flag [should] plant themselves on shores hitherto bloody and benighted."³⁷

When President Truman announced his plans for Greek and Turkish aid shortly after Kiplinger's article, at least one Farmers Union official was convinced of collusion between the administration and American business. Pointing to the purchase by Standard Oil of New Jersey of "\$300 million in

³⁵Fred Stover, "Production, Ideas, and Wars," p. 8; Henry Luce, "The American Century," Life X (February 17, 1941), pp. 61-65.

³⁶Quoted in Stover, The Contest, pp. 9-10.

³⁷Quoted in Stover, The Contest, pp. 14-15.

Near Eastern oil on the same day that Truman submitted his proposal to Congress," Fred Stover labelled the Truman Doctrine an "oil doctrine." Rather than "serving its announced purpose of helping people threatened by Communism," it was in fact assisting American corporations in "the most colossal oil grab in history." Operating behind the Truman Doctrine's smoke screen of political ideology and subsidized by public tax dollars, America's oil monopolists were pursuing "the wonders of private enterprise" abroad.³⁸

The suggestion of government-business collusion was reinforced by the direct ties between American corporations and specific Truman administration officials. Secretary of Defense James Forrestal's links with Dillon, Read and Company, a business with "a huge financial stake in Middle Eastern oil," caused the biggest stir, but John Foster Dulles' business ties were not far behind. The list of profit-seeking corporations with direct links to the administration included Studebaker, Pepsi-Cola, and the Texas Oil Company. Interestingly, a number of officials working directly with European reconstruction held executive positions in Time Corporation, home of Henry Luce and the American Century. The pattern seemed to reflect the 1946 advice of Standard Oil treasurer Leo D. Welch. "Private enterprise," he

³⁸Iowa Union Farmer, April 19, 1947, p. 4, and June 21, 1947, p. 4.

had said, "must begin to evolve its foreign policy, starting with the most important contribution it can make--men in government!"³⁹

Regarded as even more threatening than the ties between government officials and private corporations was the apparent desire of America's "corporate manipulators" to re-establish ties with their old European cartel partners. The "diabolical" nature of the attempt was seen in the fact that many of their former partners were individuals and corporations who had supported the fascist policies of both Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Fred Stover pointed to the revival of Germany's I.G. Farben industry as a typical example, while Jim Patton saw the same design in the 1949 attempt to grant an Export-Import Bank loan to Franco's Spain. What made the latter case even more disturbing to Patton was that pressure for the loan was being exerted by representatives of the Anderson-Clayton Company, a Houston corporation bearing the name, and by inference the support, of Assistant Secretary of State Will Clayton. After having fought a world war to eliminate these forces, the United States was now seeking to re-create the status quo by establishing business ties with "the vast cartels, combines, monopolies, and conspiracies that [had previously] governed the economy of Europe and [had] thrust their tentacles throughout the colonial

³⁹Iowa Union Farmer, April 17, 1948, p. 1, and January 15, 1949, p. 4

areas of the world." The desire to do so meant that the American government would have to conveniently and silently violate wartime agreements signed for the express purposes of eradicating Nazism and limiting German war potential. The most tragic element of the plan, according to Stover, was that the whole effort was being financed "with public funds skillfully wangled out of Congress in the name of European relief."⁴⁰

Public funds were also being used to build up what the Farmers Union perceived as a particularly potent element of the unholy alliance, the American military. President Truman's calls for increased military spending were seen as being prompted not only by the desire to contain Soviet expansion through military encirclement but also by the need to protect corporate interests abroad. A 1946 Iowa Farmers Union resolution condemned "the extension of the United States monopolies into the world markets under the protection of a world-wide American military force." When aid to Greece and Turkey was condemned a year later as a "colossal oil grab," the Iowa group made note of the protection provided to the effort through the growing number of American airfields in the eastern

⁴⁰Iowa Union Farmer, April 17, 1948, p. 1; National Farmers Union press release, April 27, 1948, Stover Papers; James G. Patton to Will Clayton, May 13, 1949, and James G. Patton to Dean Acheson, May 13, 1949, 852.51/5-1349, Box 6350, Record Group 59.

Mediterranean. What particularly puzzled and angered Fred Stover, once again, was that great amounts of public money were being used to protect private investments. "Whenever," he told an Australian audience in 1950, "an American monopoly or investment banker wants to invest some of their corporate profits abroad, then our military forces must go along to provide public protection for free private enterprise." Stover found himself "at a loss to know what to call a system where we socialize the losses and individualize the gains."⁴¹

The added ingredient of the military as a fixture of the unholy alliance moved some Farmers Union figures to conclude that the Truman administration was preparing for a third world war. New York's Archie Wright assessed the "aggressive policy of business expansion in foreign lands" as the vanguard of an administration program "bent to big business interests" and promoting the development of a "warfare state." Huge stocks of surplus goods in the hands of several large corporations led to Wright's conclusion that "one of two things is certain to happen. Either, we have the biggest economic bust the world has ever seen, or, we go by successive steps to war." Adding to the equation the fact that European "purchases [of

⁴¹Iowa Union Farmer, September 28, 1946, p. 1, April 19, 1947, p. 4, and June 21, 1947, p. 4; Address of F.W. Stover to Australian Peace Congress, Melbourne, Australia, April 19, 1950, Stover Papers.

American goods] have been heavier than any year except just previous to World War II," Wright concluded in June of 1950 that, "chances of war are great in the next 6-24 months." In any case, he argued in quoting from Washington Farm Letter editor Wayne Darrow, "You may as well make your plans on a basis that the U.S. is moving into a war economy. . . whether war develops or not."⁴²

The Farmers Union belief that the United States was sponsoring a program of "world wide corporate totalitarianism" led it to closely monitor, and to frequently criticize, the nation's foreign policy decisions. As a proponent of internationalism, Jim Patton had favored the creation of both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. But by 1948 he was disturbed that their originally intended purpose as a source of public funding for international development and reconstruction had been subverted. They now appeared to him to be under the control of "international private banking concerns" who viewed the agencies as instruments for private profit. Just as he criticized the Truman administration for failing to fully support such United Nations organizations

⁴²Archie Wright, "To All Officers and Delegates," June 6, 1950, Box 3, New York Milk Shed Records; Archie Wright, "To All Officers and Delegates," July 7, 1950, Box 4, Folder 25, Fred Briehl Papers, 1911-1974, Collection #3474, Cornell University; Northeastern Union Farmer, November, 1951, p. 1.

as F.A.O. and U.N.R.R.A., Patton now argued that the United States was not taking adequate steps to wrest control of the I.M.F. and World Bank from the hands of private investors.⁴³

Believing that restrictive trade policies had contributed directly to World War Two, the National Farmers Union also called on the Truman administration to reject scarcity-producing, individually negotiated commodity agreements and to pursue instead reciprocal trade packages that would lead to "the freer exchange of agricultural and industrial goods between nations." Such an approach, the Union felt, would allow the United States "to import the commodities of other nations so as to enable them to buy from us." Jim Patton strongly protested the closing of House Ways and Means committee hearings on extension of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act in 1948, and warned that the act's near defeat was sponsored by "special interest groups" whose alarming efforts would be seen by the world "as evidence that the United States [had] not wholly abandoned its prewar economic isolationism."⁴⁴

In line with their desire for open trade, Patton and the National Farmers

⁴³National Union Farmer, April 1, 1947, p. 1 and March, 1948, p. 5A.

⁴⁴National Union Farmer, April 15, 1946, p. 1 of "program section;" Robert and Rosalind Engler, "The Farmers Union in Washington," (September, 1948), pp. 82-83; Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," May 10, 1948, pp. 3-4.

Union also favored lowering world tariff barriers as a way of improving the living standards and full employment opportunities for people in all nations. Typical of the organization's views on tariffs was its May, 1950, protest of proposed restrictions on oil imports. Expressing his opposition both to New York Congressman Eugene J. Keogh and to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Farmers Union legislative secretary Russell Smith spoke of the organization's "long-standing advocacy of gradual and steady reduction of barriers of all kinds to international trade." Oil import restrictions, he argued, would hit particularly hard at United States trade with Venezuela, "one of the few countries which is able to accumulate American dollars in sufficient quantity to make purchases in this country without the necessity of elaborate government loans or grants by us in order that it may do so." Beyond damaging trade with our South American neighbor, Smith wrote, the proposed restrictions would also hamper the much-needed goal of bringing all nations together "as functioning members of the world economy."⁴⁵

Farmers Union faith in reciprocity and its rejection of restrictionist trade policies even led the organization to oppose programs that clearly favored the American agricultural community. When it was suggested in

⁴⁵Russell Smith to Dean Acheson, May 31, 1950, and Russell Smith to Eugene J. Keogh, May 31, 1950, 400.116/5-3150, Box 1745, Record Group 59; Robert and Rosalind Engler, "The Farmers Union in Washington," p. 82.

1949 that European nations receiving Marshall Plan assistance be required to buy U.S. surplus farm crops, the Farmers Union joined with the Farm Bureau and the National Grange in protesting the scheme. "Much as the farm organizations want to market their surplus crops," the three groups jointly announced, "we feel it would be a serious blunder for us to assume the responsibility of dictating to the European nations what they must buy." A proposal a year later to substitute one billion dollars of federally owned farm surpluses for one-third of the funds requested for E.C.A. operation was also jointly rejected. Passage of such a plan would, the farmers argued, "lend substance to the Russian claim that America is using E.C.A. for the purpose of dumping its farm surpluses." Farmers Union opposition to Washington Senator Warren Magnuson's 1949 and 1950 efforts to impose protective tariffs on foreign agricultural imports offered further evidence that the organization's dedication to open trade transcended agrarian self-interest.⁴⁶

In what was clearly an exception to its philosophy and general practices, the Farmers Union in April of 1950 did attempt to influence American trade policy to the advantage of the nation's farmers. Informed by California

⁴⁶Russell Smith to Eugene J. Keogh, May 31, 1950, Record Group 59; Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," August 1, 1949, p. 1, and March 27, 1950, pp. 1-2; U.S. Congress, Senate, 81st Congress, 1st Session, Congressional Record, p. 14317.

vegetable growers that the importation of Egyptian onions "threaten[ed] the entire onion industry in the United States," Russell Smith asked the State Department to intervene by invoking the infrequently used "escape clause." A part of the reciprocal trade program that allowed for "protection in special instances," the clause, to Smith's knowledge, had never been invoked for the benefit of American farmers. In light of what Smith saw as "a rising trend both in agriculture and labor groups toward renewed resistance to the lowering of U.S. tariff barriers," he warned that refusal to ever invoke such cushions as the escape clause would amount to an "over-zealous application of a good principle" that would in fact, he said, "damage the principle itself."⁴⁷

The attempt to limit the importation of Egyptian onions was a rare exception to the Farmers Union stance that favored open international trade. Its consistent support for the International Wheat Agreement and its criticisms of the Senate's "short-sighted provincialism" in delaying approval of the program in 1948 were more typical of the Farmers Union acceptance of international cooperation.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Russell Smith to Carl D. Corse, April 25, 1950, 411.0031/4-2550, Box 1804, Record Group 59.

⁴⁸Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," August 23, 1948, p. 3; Testimony of James G. Patton, May 23, 1949, U.S. Congress, Senate, 81st Congress, 1st Session, The International Wheat Agreement: Hearings Before

No administration program received as much Farmers Union attention as Secretary of State George Marshall's plan for European recovery. After failing in their efforts to have the Marshall Plan coordinated through the United Nations, Jim Patton and other prominent figures in the Farmers Union reluctantly supported the program as the only available alternative. Even in their support, however, they consistently challenged the plan as both short-sighted and misguided and as reinforcing the inequalities of America's economic status quo.

Begun at a time when the government was pushing for full production, the European Recovery Program offered a potential windfall to American agriculture. The government-sponsored opening of European markets for agricultural products as part of the design to revive the European economy was hailed as the farmers' saving grace by The Christian Science Monitor and as "an export subsidy on a grand scale" by later historians.⁴⁹ Farmers Union officials and patrons, however, judged it quite differently. To them, the Marshall Plan represented at best only short-term benefits. Agricultural exports may temporarily increase, Fred Stover argued, but a Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations, p. 69.

⁴⁹Frederick W. Carr, "ERP: Farmers' Dividend," The Christian Science Monitor, June 18, 1949, p. 5; John T. Schlebecker, Whereby We Thrive: A History of American Farming, 1607-1972 (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1975), p. 278.

without proper safeguards the program would accomplish little more than "taking food away from our poor and giving it to the poor in Europe." The end result may be European stability, but "only at the cost of sacrificing stabilization at home."⁵⁰

Stover was supported in this view by Minnesota's Jim Youngdale, a former Congressional candidate and an avid supporter of the Farmers Union. Writing to the Iowa Union Farmer in January of 1949, Youngdale criticized the Marshall Plan as "a device to maintain a temporary false prosperity at home by dumping . . . goods on foreign markets to dispose of potential surpluses." Less convinced than Stover of the program's potential to promote European stabilization, Youngdale wrote that, "The effect will be to create a glut abroad and to cause unemployment and depression Once foreign markets are glutted, the surpluses will pile up here to cause a depression at home."⁵¹

Fortune magazine agreed that the program was being used "as a dumping mechanism for U.S. exports" and announced that, "many Congressmen took for granted, when ECA was passed, that it would be used for disposing of farm

⁵⁰Address by F.W. Stover, New Party Convention, Mitchell, South Dakota, June 27, 1948, p. 6, Stover Papers; Iowa Union Farmer, November 15, 1947, p. 4.

⁵¹Iowa Union Farmer, January 15, 1949, p. 4.

gluts." It even published a cartoon showing a distressed Secretary Brannan hoping for ECA assistance in disposing of agricultural surpluses. Fortune's concern, however, was not that the practice was harmful to farmers in the long run but that it "accelerate[d] the current worldwide drift toward state controls and statist direction of trade."⁵²



The Farmers Union contention that increases in agricultural exports were merely temporary was supported by Department of Agriculture statistics. After peaking at \$3,830,000,000 in 1948, agricultural exports declined by \$844,000,000 in 1949. That same year, agricultural imports exceeded exports for the first time since before World War Two. To New Jersey's Waldo McNutt, the Truman administration's obsession with deterring communism was responsible for the sudden drop in agricultural exports.

⁵²"The Misuse of ECA," Fortune XXXIX (April, 1949), pp. 74-5.

Selling products only to those nations considered essential in the fight against communism, and denying products to nations that had come under the control of the Soviet Union, clearly limited the nation's overseas markets. McNutt rejected the approach as narrow-minded and called instead for a policy that would allow American farmers open access to all markets, not just those dictated by the political fetishes of the Washington establishment.⁵³

In addition to critiquing the Marshall Plan as both short-sighted and misguided, the Farmers Union also criticized it for contributing to the growth of the nation's most powerful economic elements. In a letter to E.C.A. administrator Paul Hoffman, Jim Patton expressed his concern that shipments to Europe were being funneled through "the biggest units of industry and business." He urged Hoffman to use European recovery as an opportunity to enhance not the "great aggregations of economic power," but the small businesses and cooperatives of the nation. "Every effort," Patton wrote, "must be exerted to enable cooperatives to become the principal channels of supply on this side and the principal channels of distribution on the other side." There is no evidence that Hoffman followed Patton's advice.

⁵³U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Statistics, 1960, p. 593; North Dakota Union Farmer, November 6, 1950, p. 2; Iowa Union Farmer, October 12, 1946, p. 1.

Nor is there any indication that the administration of the Marshall Plan changed Patton's earlier expressed opinion that government officials were not sincerely interested in the needs of either starving Europeans or America's small farmers.⁵⁴

Fred Stover and Jim Youngdale were more blunt in their analyses of the economic implications of the Marshall Plan. Stover assessed the program as "a colossal swindle by which countless billions of dollars are extracted from United States tax payers to insure Wall Street interests. . . ." Youngdale contended that the only people who would benefit from the plan would be the "big business tycoons" who were running it. Both opinions were the result of a widely held belief, in Farmers Union circles, that the Marshall Plan's originally expressed intention of providing economic relief for Europe had been quickly forgotten. In its place was a scheme designed by the "unholy" alliance of government and business to provide non-communist European nations with sufficient military equipment to ward off the potential threat of communist expansion. As Marshall Plan nations

⁵⁴Farmers Union press release on European Recovery Program, April 27, 1948, Stover Papers. Patton's earlier doubts about the sincerity of Truman officials included his 1945 questioning of the State Department's loyalty to F.A.O. director general Sir John Orr's world agricultural program, and his 1946 request for the recall of Herbert Hoover from his food mission abroad. Department of State, "Opinions and Activities," November 23, 1945, p. 2, and April 8, 1946, p. 5.

were, in the words of the North Dakota Union Farmer, "required to spend more and more of their dollar credits on armaments," the Marshall Plan became less a program for European economic recovery and more an extension of the American policy of containment. "Guns, not butter" became the cry of Marshall Plan administrators and of Wall Street concerns for whom the transfer of military equipment meant a greater profit than that found in the sale of agricultural produce.⁵⁵

North Dakota's Glenn Talbott was equally critical of corporate intentions. While he stressed the importance of European markets for agricultural surpluses, he criticized those who looked upon European recovery as an opportunity solely for profit. His position that the primary goal of European recovery must be the promotion of the general welfare led to a heated discussion with Missouri's conservative Republican Senator James P. Kem. During an October, 1947, subcommittee hearing, Kem proposed that the United States consider assistance to Europe only after thoroughly examining what European nations could give the United States in return. Talbott argued that assistance should be provided even without assurances of

⁵⁵Address by F.W. Stover, New Party Convention, Mitchell, South Dakota, June 27, 1948, p. 6, Stover Papers; Iowa Union Farmer, November 15, 1947, p. 4, and January 15, 1949, p. 4; North Dakota Union Farmer, November 6, 1950, p. 2.

repayment. Such an approach, he felt, would help everyone avoid the possibility of war.⁵⁶

Aside from this laudable dedication to a cooperative spirit in the international arena, what made the Farmers Union critique of U.S. foreign policy so impressive was its repeated insistence that what went on in the realm of foreign affairs was irrevocably linked to the domestic scene. Time and again in these early postwar years, Farmers Union spokesmen returned to this theme of interconnectedness as the chief reason why, as Glenn Talbott put it, farmers had "no choice but to take an active and vigorous interest in our foreign policy."⁵⁷

In testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in its 1948 hearings on the Marshall Plan, Jim Patton insisted that the nation's farmers supported the overseas shipment of fertilizer and farm machinery as part of the European Recovery Program. Their willingness to do so, however, would not continue if the exports were used by businesses as an excuse to increase prices for these products at home. To prevent this from happening, Patton urged the government to re-impose domestic price controls. Only in this way could farmers be assured that a plan to put Europe back on its feet did

⁵⁶Statement of Glenn Talbott, October 8, 1947, Prices of Consumers Goods, pp. 1979-2014, Record Group 128.

⁵⁷Statement of Glenn Talbott, October 8, 1947, Prices of Consumers Goods, pp. 1977-1980, Record Group 128.

not also result in further harm to the already damaged state of the nation's farmers.⁵⁸

This link between foreign and domestic policies was also addressed by Fred Stover. He noted that programs such as the Marshall Plan would continue to place unnecessary burdens on the "low income groups in our population" unless the government took measures to protect both American consumers and American farmers. While he did not deny the need for overseas markets for American goods, Stover did question the argument of American business that foreign markets were necessary because Americans were unable to consume all that was produced in the United States. It was not the inability to consume, Stover argued, but the inability to purchase that created difficulties for Americans. Industry's unwillingness to provide fair wages for their workers stood in stark contrast to their equally strident refusal to lower prices while accumulating increased profits. It was this greed of American corporations that not only limited the purchasing power of the nation's citizens but also furthered the corporate insistence on the need for overseas expansion.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Testimony of Jim Patton, January 26, 1948, European Recovery Program, p. 932.

⁵⁹Iowa Union Farmer, November 15, 1947, p. 4; Address of F.W. Stover to Australian Peace Congress, Melbourne, Australia, April 19, 1950, Stover Papers.

Gordon Roth also focused on the link between domestic and foreign policies when he chastised American corporations for their efforts to curtail wage and price controls at home while simultaneously hoarding steel, copper, and other materials critical to European recovery. While businesses defended their actions as part of a "crusade to save private enterprise and the American way of life," Roth portrayed them instead as part and parcel of a "fourteen carat gold-plated reactionary thinking" that hurt farmers at home, promoted mass starvation abroad, and disguised the true goal of increased corporate profits.⁶⁰

For New York's Archie Wright, U.S. foreign policy was particularly destructive to American agriculture. Unlike many of his Farmers Union counterparts, who saw the chief danger to farmers lying in the restriction of overseas markets or in the growing strength of American business, Wright feared that the real problem would be the mindless destruction of the nation's land. The "so-called defense effort" was being run by "industry minded" officials who had no knowledge of agriculture. They thought, Wright argued, that food "is like the air, it's just everywhere and all you have to do to stock up is to go to a grocery store and if you want to eat you

⁶⁰Gordon Roth, "Food for Freedom" radio addresses, January 13, March 3, and September 22, 1946, Stover Papers.

go to a restaurant." Combining their lack of agricultural understanding with their desire for full production as a weapon against communism resulted in a policy that in the end would spell "common disaster for all." Agriculture, in particular, would "curl up like a leaf in the fire."⁶¹

Wright's commentary spoke volumes about the position of America's small farmers in the early years of the Cold War. The family farm faced economic extinction not only because of a lengthy national tradition of taking the farming community for granted and not only because of corporate agriculture's pervasive growth, but also because the Truman administration was both inadequately prepared and increasingly unwilling to avert its eyes from its primary focus on foreign affairs. The overwhelming interest in containing the spread of Soviet communism, and the obvious attraction of using overseas corporate expansion as a means of promoting that end, left small farmers in the ranks of the forgotten. In a world where the games of power and influence were played on a zero-sum field, the result was a reaffirmation of the small farmer as the stepchild of the American economy.

This is not to argue that Harry Truman deliberately contrived behind

⁶¹ Archie Wright, "To All Officers and Delegates," June 6, 1951, Box 1, Folder "Delegate Letters, 1948-1951," New York Milk Shed Records; "Archie Wright's Report to the Farmers Union Convention," October 7, 1950, Box 1, Folder "1950 Convention," New York Milk Shed Records.

closed doors to deny economic advancement to the nation's family farmers. In fact, his public support for small farmers as the backbone of Jeffersonian democracy was in all likelihood an honest expression of his personal feelings. But, like other presidential figures who followed him in the years of the Cold War, the seduction to focus too exclusively on foreign affairs was overwhelming. In yielding to this temptation, Harry Truman allied himself with the corporate entities more able to benefit him in the struggle with communism. His decision reinforced the Farmers Union belief that an "unholy alliance," detrimental to the interests of small farmers, was a very real part of the power structure of the nation.

Chapter Four

Weathering the Storm

Twentieth century critics of American foreign policy have never fared well either at the hands of the government or at the altar of public opinion. Dissenters have often faced overzealous governmental scrutiny, and domestic opponents have frequently reveled in their role of public pariah. They have also suffered from internal dissension, experiencing on numerous occasions organizational divisiveness brought about by public or governmental pressures. It was not surprising, then, that the Farmers Union dissent from President Truman's international policies earned for the organization the suspicion of the American press, the animosity of administration and congressional agencies, the ridicule of its chief agrarian rival, and the enmity of internal critics. The organization publicly weathered well the storm of criticism. But the attacks on the Union exacted a heavy price, and by the closing months of 1950 the Farmers Union would be consumed by a bitter organizational dispute over the direction of American foreign policy.

Attacks on the National Farmers Union inevitably focused on charges of

organizational sympathy with, or even direct control by, Communist agents. Studies of the role of the Communist Party in American agriculture have correctly warned against overestimating the strength of this relationship. William Pratt, for example, in a 1985 article entitled "Radicals, Farmers, and Historians," argued that "farmers never were a high priority" either for American socialists or communists, for "with the demise of historical Populism in the 1890's, the focus of the left in the United States shifted from the countryside to the city."¹ Pratt acknowledged the presence of Communists or Communist sympathizers within the Farmers Union, but his final assessment of their role in shaping the organization's policies was in line with Lowell Dyson's earlier judgment that "farm work was always the party's poor stepchild." "Given the individualistic nature of American farmers," Dyson argued, "Communists had always worked at a disadvantage" when trying to transform the nation's agrarian population into Communist revolutionaries.²

Contemporaries of the National Farmers Union, however, were convinced

¹William C. Pratt, "Radicals, Farmers, and Historians: Some Recent Scholarship about Agrarian Radicalism in the Upper Midwest," North Dakota History LII (Fall, 1985), p. 18.

²Lowell Dyson, Red Harvest: The Communist Party and American Farmers (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 202. See also William C. Pratt, "Farmers, Communists, and the FBI in the Upper Midwest," Agricultural History LXII (Summer, 1989), pp. 61-80.

that the group had succumbed to the internal borings of Communist moles. In the prevalent hysteria of the early Cold War, no other rationale seemed capable of explaining the organization's outspoken and seemingly misguided criticisms of American policy. While the evidence used to justify the accusations consisted almost exclusively of contrived fabrication, much of the American public accepted as gospel truth that the Farmers Union was, if not directly controlled by Moscow, at least sympathetic to Soviet aims. Typical of this public perception was the astonished statement of a Pennsylvania woman upon learning that the courts had ruled in favor of the Farmers Union in a libel case. "What was wrong with the courts," she wanted to know. "Was it not well established that the Farmers Union was Communist infiltrated?"³

The impression had been imbedded in the public psyche even before the conclusion of World War Two, most notably through an October, 1944, article in the conservative Farm Journal entitled "Communist Beachhead in Agriculture." Piecing together shaky strands of what would be considered in almost any court of law largely circumstantial evidence, author Robert Cruise McManus announced that the Farmers Union "is not yet, by any

³Irene B. Stanford to Ezra Benson, April 15, 1953, Box 2320, Folder "Publications 4-2," Record Group 16 (General Correspondence).

means, reduced to the status of a Communist captive, but it is time that all farmers clearly understand what is going on." With apologies to Jim Patton, whom he suspected was merely an unwitting victim of Communist intrigue, McManus presented his damning evidence of Farmers Union collusion with, or sympathy for, Communist front organizations.⁴

The role played by Charles Egley, the general manager of the St. Paul Farmers Union Livestock Commission Company, as 1940-1941 director of the American Peace Mobilization, was offered by McManus as one piece of evidence. The A.P.M., a group that had protested the nation's defense policies and which, according to McManus, advocated a "program of sabotage" against the government, was also said to be supported by six other Farmers Union leaders: Alabama's Gerald Harris, Louisiana's Clinton Clark, South Dakota's E.H. Chrum, Montana's H.S. Bruce, Ohio's H.R. Lenox, and Pennsylvania's Solon Philips. That none of these individuals was prominent in the making of National Farmers Union policy indicated just how far McManus had stretched in his questionable efforts to prove guilt by association.

McManus pursued the same line of attack with two other charges: that the Farmers Union's Washington, D.C. representative, Paul Sifton, was a

⁴Robert Cruise McManus, "Communist Beachhead in Agriculture," Farm Journal LXVIII (October, 1944), pp. 23, 84-85.

member of the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, a group characterized as "the legal arm of the Communist party," and that the Farmers Union had an odd relationship with Farm Research Incorporated, publishers of Facts for Farmers. Both the National Farmers Union and Farm Research, wrote McManus, had received financial backing from the Marshall Fund, a program established "under the will of the late Robert Marshall, a young millionaire of Communist leanings." In addition, Farm Research had been founded in 1932 by Lem Harris, former secretary of the Communist Party of Minnesota, and its Facts for Farmers, wrote McManus, "consistently follow[ed] the Communist line in its editorial policies." The intended impression, of course, was that in aligning itself with a group that "followed the Communist line" the Farmers Union was either a mindless dupe of, or a subversively intentional proponent of, a Moscow-directed program of Communist expansion. In the narrow-minded atmosphere of the times, McManus was unwilling to grant the possibility that, in opposing American foreign policy, the Farmers Union acted as an independent agent whose views happened to coincide with those of Facts for Farmers.

The Farmers Union also shared the views of Farm Front, a paper published by the New York State Farm Commission of the Communist Party.⁵ In fact,

⁵Lowell Dyson, "Radical Farm Organizations and Periodicals in

the Farmers Union was heartily praised by Farm Front as "the most democratic of the great farm groups" and as performing "a genuine service to agriculture."⁶ The journal often carried Farmers Union news, and its opinions were frequently identical to those expressed by Jim Patton, Glenn Talbott, Fred Stover, and Archie Wright. As the Cold War became more and more a fact of life, Farm Front echoed the Farmers Union by supporting both United Nations activity over unilateral American programs and passage of the Brannan Plan as a corrective to the Cold War-inspired "economic difficulties" of the nation's farmers.⁷ It similarly mirrored the Farmers Union in rejecting American support for the non-democratic government of Greece, administration attempts to use food as a weapon to influence European politics, and the efforts of Wall Street bankers to use the Cold War "to conquer the markets of the world."⁸ That the Farmers Union could

America, 1920-1960," Agricultural History XLV (April, 1971), p. 117.

⁶H.K. Tharin, "Are Farmers Really Organized," Farm Front, May, 1945, p. 4.

⁷George Cook, "Farmers Union Convention," Farm Front, November, 1949, p. 1; Fred Briehl, "Greece, Turkey, and Farmers," Farm Front, April, 1947, p. 1; George Cook, "The Marshall Plan and the Farmer," Farm Front, November, 1947, p. 2; George Cook, "Farmers and Foreign Policy," Farm Front, June, 1950, p. 3; Fred Briehl, "Farmers and the Cold War," Farm Front, July, 1950, p. 1.

⁸"Freedom From Hunger," Farm Front, January, 1947, p. 1; George Cook, "The Marshall Plan and the Farmer," Farm Front, November, 1947, p. 2; George Cook, "Ill-Will or Good," Farm Front, May, 1949, p. 3; "Wide Battle Front," Farm Front, July, 1950, p. 1.

share these views with a Communist-affiliated organization without itself being a Communist front was unthinkable to McManus. He would have been confused as well by the persistent efforts of Farm Front's Communist editors to encourage their readers to seek change through the democratic process of contacting their congressmen.

While guilt by association was McManus's preferred method of attack, he resorted to a frontal assault when he charged that Archie Wright was "a foremost member of the Communist party" who had addressed the party's national convention in 1936.⁹ Wright denied that he had ever been a Communist and that he had spoken to the party's convention, and he sued the Farm Journal for \$7.6 million. Unfortunately for Wright, as Lowell Dyson pointed out in Red Harvest, "the judge narrowed the case to the question of whether calling someone a Communist was libel."¹⁰ When the jury decided that it was not, McManus and the Farm Journal walked away with a smug sense of vindication, and Archie Wright was left erroneously tainted as a Communist agent.

Six years after this decision that the term "Communist" was not in itself libelous, another federal court stood the ruling on its head in a case that had

⁹McManus, "Communist Beachhead," p. 23.

¹⁰Dyson, Red Harvest, p. 194; National Union Farmer, March 15, 1945, p. 2.

all the markings of a pathetic comedy. It began when the Utah division of the American Farm Bureau Federation, in opposing the re-election of Congressman Walter Granger, published the statement that, "Representative Granger has exhibited his evident animosity toward farm organizations (except the communist dominated Farmers Union)."¹¹ The Farmers Union objected to the characterization and initiated legal action. While the Utah Farm Bureau was apparently willing to apologize and settle out of court, its parent organization was not. Eager to prove its often-stated claim that "the Farmers Union consistently advocates Communist causes, parrots Communist propaganda and refuses to denounce Communistic activities," the American Farm Bureau Federation encouraged its Utah affiliate to seek total victory in the week-long \$250,000 libel case that opened in Salt Lake City on May 14, 1951.¹²

¹¹United States Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit, *Utah State Farm Bureau Federation et al. vs. National Farmers Union Service Corporation et al.*, June 11, 1952, Box 17, Folder "National Farmers Union Press Releases," Papers of Herbert J. Waters, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

¹²National Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 1; GTA Digest, June, 1951, p. 7. The quote about the Farmers Union advocating Communist causes is from a September 15, 1950 address delivered by Iowa Farm Bureau Federation president E. Howard Hill (Box 9, Folder 5, Hill Papers). As a major figure in the Farm Bureau, his comments were typical of the organization's overall negative attitude toward the Farmers Union. The speech was also a source of frustration for this writer, for Hill began his tirade against the Farmers Union at the bottom of page 7 and completed it on page 11. The bulk of his

With the term "communist dominated" deemed libelous per se, the jury was instructed to decide the case on the basis of two issues: whether the charges were true or false, and, if false, how financially damaging they had been to the Farmers Union.

Farm Bureau lawyers produced an abundance of witnesses to prove their contention that "the economic and political theories of the Union were similar or parallel to the doctrines and teachings of the Communist Party."¹⁴ Among them were many former Communists brought in to testify about the ties between Farmers Union officials and the Communist Party of America. Typical of these ex-Communists, both for the nature of his testimony as well as for the ease with which his charges were refuted, was

arguments should have been on pages 8 through 10, but those three pages were mysteriously missing from the copy at Iowa State.

¹³U.S. Court of Appeals, Farm Bureau vs. National Farmers Union, p. 3.

¹⁴U.S. Court of Appeals, Farm Bureau vs. National Farmers Union, p. 4.

Miami newspaperman Paul Crouch. The journalist informed the Salt Lake City court that a regional organizer for the Farmers Union in Tennessee had been a secret member of the Communist Party and had used that position to influence Farmers Union policy and membership. Farmers Union attorney Quentin Burdick, legal counsel for the North Dakota Farmers Union and son of Congressman Usher Burdick, challenged the allegation and got Crouch to admit that in previous sworn testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee he had acknowledged that the individual in question had not been a Communist.¹⁵

Burdick just as easily dismissed the testimony of Manning Johnson, another ex-Communist who told the court that as a member of the Communist Central Committee in the 1930's he had helped put Communist Party members into the Farmers Union in New York. Reminded that the Union had not organized a New York affiliate until 1944, Manning was taken aback and admitted that he had mistaken the Farmers Union for some other organization. Judge Ritter quickly disallowed his entire testimony.¹⁶

Other equally pathetic attempts to impugn the Farmers Union were offered as the trial progressed. Howard Rushmore, a New York City Hearst newspaper reporter, identified a former South Dakota Farmers Union

¹⁵National Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 1; GTA Digest, June, 1951, p. 8.

¹⁶National Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 1; GTA Digest, June, 1951, p. 8.

member and a former Eastern Farmers Union official as Communists who had worked in the party's youth programs in the 1930's; that neither man was any longer affiliated with the Farmers Union made Rushmore's comments irrelevant. Maurice Malkin, another New York ex-Communist, had little to say specifically about Farmers Union members but gloatingly noted that "teachers and preachers were easy marks for the Communists" and that Eleanor Roosevelt was a typical dupe who "fell for anything." The latter observation drew a sharp reprimand from Judge Ritter and a request for the Farm Bureau lawyers to produce facts instead of fantasy and innuendo. Their inability to do so became even more obvious when North Dakota Farm Bureau insurance agent John C. Dustin offered as his bit of damning testimony a recollection of having seen on the lunchroom wall of the Farmers Union headquarters in Denver in 1946 pictures of Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Joseph Stalin. Farmers Union General Manager C.E. Huff denied the charge and tellingly informed the court that the wall had never held portraits of either Joseph Stalin or Harry Truman.¹⁷

The ineffectiveness of their witnesses forced the Farm Bureau attorneys to new lines of attack. Lawyer A.H. Nebeker wondered aloud why an agrarian organization was so intensely interested in foreign affairs. This subtle

¹⁷National Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 8.

suggestion of ulterior motivation was abandoned, however, when it was pointed out that both the Grange and the Farm Bureau included sections on foreign affairs in their annual programs and that the Farm Bureau had its own Department of International Affairs. A similarly misguided attempt to link the Farmers Union with Communists because of the organization's preference for cooperatives over free enterprise came to a quick halt when Quentin Burdick read from the Farm Bureau letterhead the names of more than a dozen co-ops affiliated with the Farm Bureau. This attempt to argue "communist domination" from the angle of parallel attitudes was as valid, Burdick concluded, as suggesting that because both Communists and Americans wear pants that all Americans are Communists.¹⁸

The Farm Bureau's condemnation of the Farmers Union through the tactic of guilt by association was devised by that practiced master of the art, Robert Cruise McManus. The author of the "Communist Beachhead in Agriculture" article had been hired by the Farm Bureau to prove the case against the Farmers Union, and he had sat side by side with the Farm Bureau attorneys throughout the week-long trial. His success in impugning Archie Wright was not repeated in Utah, however, for the jury returned a verdict in

¹⁸National Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 8; GTA Digest, June, 1951, pp. 8-9.

favor of the Farmers Union. Impressed with the argument that both the Farmers Union business ventures and membership drives had been hurt by the Farm Bureau comment, but perhaps even more overwhelmed by the absolute failure of the Farm Bureau to offer anything resembling a credible case, the jury on May 21 awarded the Farmers Union \$25,000 in damages. While the award was only one-tenth of the Farmers Union initial request, and although Judge Ritter in denying a Farm Bureau plea for a new trial said that a verdict over \$25,000 would not have been excessive, Jim Patton and other Farmers Union officials were pleased. They were even more encouraged when a federal appellate court in June of 1952 affirmed the lower court's decision with the observation that, "In the temper of the times, the communist label is even more odious and defamatory than the pro-Nazi and pro-Fascist label of another day."¹⁹

In the same week that the Salt Lake City jury announced its decision, the Farmers Union recorded another victory with the retraction by a Texas American Legion post of a published charge of Communist subversion in the Union. The accusation was contained in a pamphlet entitled "How You Can Fight Communism" that had circulated in a number of Farmers Union states

¹⁹National Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 1, June, 1951, p. 1, and June, 1952, p. 1; U.S. Court of Appeals, Farm Bureau vs. National Farmers Union, p. 4.

since the fall of 1950. The Union's executive committee considered initiating a libel suit similar to the one in Utah, but chose not to do so when the Cleburne, Texas, American Legion issued a public apology.²⁰

What gave the Texas accusation and apology more than local significance was the American Legion's claim that the source for its information on the Farmers Union was an F.B.I.-prepared list of Communist front organizations in the United States. Contacted by Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan, who had been alerted to the pamphlet by a panicked Farmers Union member in Joshua, Texas, F.B.I. director J. Edgar Hoover heatedly denied that his agency had ever prepared any such list. The F.B.I., Hoover informed the American Legion post commander in Cleburne, was "strictly an investigative organization." Any decision to place groups on a list of subversive organizations was made, he concluded, "not by the F.B.I., but by the Attorney General."²¹

²⁰Details of the American Legion case can be found in: National Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 1; "Minutes of Leaders Meeting," September 7, 1950, pp. 1-2, Fred Stover Papers; Charles Brannan to L.D. Shipman, March 23, 1951, Box 1, Folder "S," McCune Papers; L.D. Shipman to Charles Brannan, March 14, 1951, Charles Brannan to L.D. Shipman, April 10, 1951, Charles Brannan to J. Edgar Hoover, April 10, 1951, J. Edgar Hoover to Charles Brannan, April 20, 1951, and J. Edgar Hoover to Johnnie Clark, April 20, 1951, Box 2035, Folder "Un-American Activities," Record Group 16 (General Correspondence); and "Report of James G. Patton to Executive Committee," October 31, 1950, p. 4, Series I, Box 4, National Farmers Union Papers, University of Colorado.

²¹J. Edgar Hoover to Johnnie Clark, April 20, 1951, Box 2035, Record

Despite his attempt to pass the buck, J. Edgar Hoover was personally convinced that the Communists had made a concerted effort to infiltrate American agriculture. "The Communists realize," he wrote in February of 1951, "that if they are ever to be successful, to create a Soviet America, they must have strong support among farm groups."²² His belief was typical of a governmental attitude reflected in Congressional, State Department, and F.B.I. investigations of subversive elements in agriculture in general and of specific individuals in the Farmers Union. To his credit, President Truman did not participate in the witchhunt and, in fact, expressed support for Farmers Union attempts to clear the organization's name.²³

F.B.I. interest in the topic of Communist infiltration of agriculture began as early as 1944,²⁴ but its specific concern with the Farmers Union dates from 1950. The primary target of the investigation was the Iowa Farmers Group 16 (General Correspondence).

²²John Edgar Hoover, "Reds Are After Farmers Too," Hoosier Farmer, February, 1951, p. 21.

²³"Visit with President Truman on November 20, 1950," undated inter-office communication, Box 10, Folder 9, Patton Papers; "Confidential Statement of James G. Patton and Glenn J. Talbott: Interview with President Truman on February 12, 1951," Box 10, Folder 10, Patton Papers.

²⁴I suspect that F.B.I. interest began even before 1944, but the earliest record I have located is a November 15, 1955, memo that speaks of "the last report in this matter dated January 10, 1944." (Box 48, Folder 1, Iowa Farmers Union Records, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa)

Union and its outspoken president Fred Stover. Following an April, 1950, J. Edgar Hoover directive, government agents combed the Iowa countryside for proof that Stover "associate[d] with known Communists and . . . consistently followed the Communist Party line."²⁵ Their labors produced the meager bits and pieces of illogical evidence that passed for unquestioned truth in the hysterical atmosphere of the times. Stover was found guilty of supporting government subsidies that would allow a farmer to "make a decent living on a poor forty acre farm," of holding a tight rein over membership in the Iowa Farmers Union, of opposing both the Taft-Hartley and Smith-McCarran Acts, of aligning himself with Henry Wallace's Progressive Party movement in 1948, and, most pointedly, of never publicly criticizing the Soviet Union. On the basis of such flimsy evidence, the F.B.I. concluded that the Iowa Farmers Union "has been substantially directed, dominated or controlled by the Communist Party, USA, and has been actively engaged in furthering or promoting the objectives of the Communist Party, USA."²⁶

The State Department also followed the activities of Fred Stover and of other Farmers Union officials. Stover's April, 1950, address to what the

²⁵Des Moines Register, August 7, 1983, p. B1.

²⁶F.B.I. reports, January 24, 1956 and August 18, 1956, Box 48, Folder 1, Iowa Farmers Union Records.

State Department termed the "Communist" Peace Congress in Melbourne, Australia, was closely monitored; the Iowa farm leader was said "to have delivered greetings from Communists in the United States."²⁷ For his part, Stover was aware of the surveillance and contended that the State Department conspired with Australian officials to suppress news of his participation in the Congress. The objective of such a strategy, Stover later wrote, was "to preserve the illusion for the Australian people that the people of America were united behind the cold war."²⁸ In addition to its concern with Stover, the State Department also labelled the Montana division of the Farmers Union a "Communist front organization" and criticized the Farmers Union and other groups that supported the "Communist-promoted" Stockholm Peace Petition of March, 1950.²⁹

Not to be outdone in the search for reds in American agriculture, the

²⁷Canberra to State Department, May 19, 1950, 743.001/5-1950, Box 3560, Record Group 59. The Canberra office asked for and received State Department information on Stover, but what specifically was said about him will have to await my Freedom of Information Act request for these "access restricted" documents.

²⁸F.W. Stover to Mrs. Elizabeth Moos, May 4, 1950, Stover Papers.

²⁹Department of State, Office of Public Opinion Studies, "Organization Opinion from October 1, 1950 to February 9, 1951," February 21, 1951, p. 2, Box 19, Folder "Summary of Organization Opinions October 1950-August 1951," Record Group 59, National Archives; State Department press conference summary on "Soviet Peace Petition," July 12, 1950, Stover Papers.

House Un-American Activities Committee staged its own investigation of "communist activities among farm groups" in February and March of 1951. What the committee produced concerning the Farmers Union rivaled Robert McManus's talents in impugning guilt by association. In fact, two of the charges levelled by H.U.A.C. were identical to those first published in McManus's 1944 "Communist Beachhead in Agriculture" article: that the Farmers Union accepted contributions from the Marshall Fund, and that some Farmers Union officials were leaders of the American Peace Mobilization. The farm group was also criticized for participating in the World Youth Congress, a "Communist conference held in the summer of 1938 at Vassar College," and for calling for the repeal of the Smith and McCarran Acts.³⁰

H.U.A.C. paid particular attention to Farmers Union president Jim Patton. Among Patton's lengthy list of subversive sins was his role in sponsoring a 1947 American Slav Congress dinner honoring Claude Pepper. The Congress, H.U.A.C. charged, was a "Moscow-inspired and directed federation of

³⁰U.S. Congress, House, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, February 28 and March 9, 1951, Hearings Regarding Communist Activities Among Farm Groups: Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities; "Information from the Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities," April 1, 1957, pp. 1-2, Series XIV, Box 2, Folder 2, National Farmers Union Papers. The Committee's intense interest in nailing down Farmers Union links with the Marshall Fund is discussed in Benton J. Stong to Aubrey Williams, March 5, 1951, Box 36, Folder "National Farmers Union, Patton, 1950-1951," Williams Papers.

Communist-dominated organizations seeking by methods of propaganda and pressure to subvert the 10,000,000 people in this country of Slavic birth or descent."³¹ Patton was also condemned for helping to organize an April, 1946, meeting of the Civil Rights Congress in Detroit. Despite its name, H.U.A.C. noted, the Congress was "an organization dedicated not to the broader issues of civil liberties, but specifically to the defense of individual Communists and the Communist Party."³² Patton was not the only Farmers Union official linked to the Civil Rights Congress, for North Dakota's Glenn Talbott and Montana's D.W. Chapman were also listed as C.R.C. sympathizers. Chapman perhaps earned an even greater share of H.U.A.C.'s animosity when his name was discovered on a list of people calling for the abolition of the Committee itself. Finally, Patton was criticized for signing petitions and statements authored by the Union of Concerted Peace Efforts and by the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties, both of which were condemned as Communist front organizations. The latter group, which was also supported by Glenn Talbott, was described by H.U.A.C. in terms almost identical to its characterization of the Civil Rights Congress. It was, the Committee argued, one of the "maze of organizations . . . spawned

³¹"Information from the Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities," p. 3.

³²"Information from the Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities," p. 4.

for the alleged purpose of defending civil liberties in general but actually intended to protect Communist subversion from any penalties under the law."³³

In addition to being attacked by domestic opponents and scrutinized by a host of government agencies, the National Farmers Union was also divided internally over the issue of Communism. Negatively influenced by red-baiting hysteria, some organization officials joined in the witchhunt and added to the chorus of Communist subversion within the Union. As early as 1946, the Nebraska division of the Farmers Union, led by Chris Millus, accused the national organization of being "Communistic." In denying the charge, Jim Patton acknowledged knowing of "four admitted Communist Party members" in the Farmers Union, but noted that their membership was protected by the constitutional provision that, "No person shall be disqualified for membership because of race or on account of his political or religious affiliations." That there were Communists in the Union, and that the Communist Party at times supported the positions of the Union, did not make the organization, Patton wrote, an affiliate of the Communist Party.

³³"Information from the Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities," pp. 3-4; U.S. Congress, House, 80th Congress, 1st Session, September 2, 1947, Report on Civil Rights Congress as a Communist Front Organization by the Committee on Un-American Activities, pp. 12, 21-22, and 28-29.

Nebraska's charges were dismissed by Patton with the biting observation that, "Surely all the world's righteousness and wisdom are not stored up in narrow creviced minds of a small minority of Mr. Millus' type."³⁴

Patton's bitter comments about Chris Millus were written one day after he had composed an even more acrimonious letter to Gardner Jackson. Jackson, who had first met Patton in 1936 and who had served the Farmers Union in a variety of unofficial capacities since that time, had severed his relationship with Patton and the National Farmers Union with a lengthy and scathing August epistle in which he accused the organization and its leadership of being "bewitched by the siren song of salvation for humanity sung by the Communists." While he told Patton that he still fervently believed in the principles of the Farmers Union, a series of decisions by the organization had caused him to lose faith in the Union's leadership. Among those decisions was the appointment of the "well-known Communist advocate" Waldo McNutt as head of the newly created National Farmers Union veterans department. Jackson also accused the organization of kowtowing to the "Communist" organizers of the Marshall Fund for the purpose of obtaining financial support, and of deliberately isolating Jackson within the

³⁴James G. Patton to Members of Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America, Nebraska Division, November 15, 1946, Stover Papers.

organization because of his "insistent, un-cagey, and unsilenceable opposition to Communist infiltration" of the Union.³⁵

In his response, delayed for three months because of Patton's belief that Jackson's charges were "so preposterous as to warrant disregard," the Farmers Union president rebuked his friend in terms that clearly revealed his frustration with the seemingly continuous charges of Communist influence in the Farmers Union. Patton wrote of Jackson's "twisted illogical mind" and accused him of performing "constant intellectual masturbation" in his role of self-appointed "God of inquiry and final judgement." "You are guilty of absolute falsehood," Patton wrote Jackson, "in saying my mind has turned to the Communists." He referred to the "four announced Communists" in the Farmers Union, but told Jackson that, "I do not know any state officer who is a Communist--and you don't either."³⁶

The falling out between Jim Patton and Gardner Jackson was unfortunate. Jackson two years later admitted that his letter had "contained exaggerated interpretations of certain episodes, or even downright misinterpretations of

³⁵Gardner Jackson to Jim Patton, August 3, 1946, Box 57, Folder "NFU 1946," Jackson Papers.

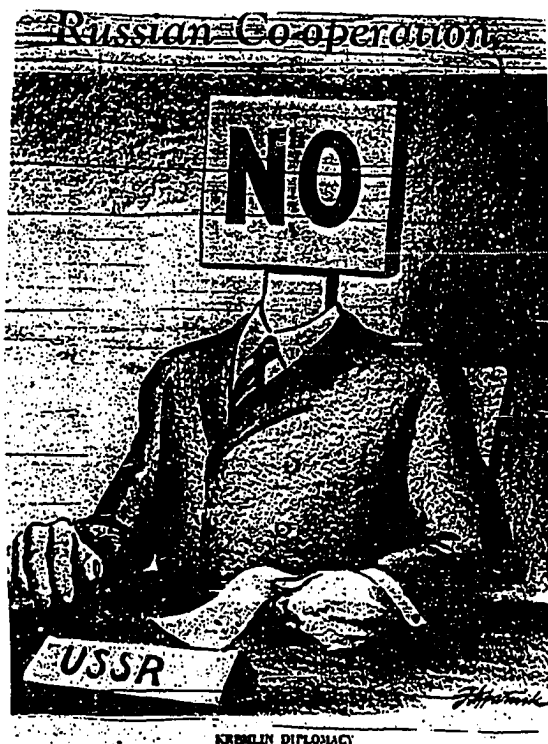
³⁶James G. Patton to Gardner Jackson, November 14, 1946, Box 57, Folder "NFU 1946," Jackson Papers. This copy of the letter differs from the copy sent by Patton to the state presidents that I found in the Stover Papers. Some of the volatile language had been cleaned up, or simply omitted. This had much to do with Jim Patton's style of operation, a subject dealt with in a later chapter.

them." But he also insisted that "nothing has occurred in the intervening period to make me think that the main burden of the letter was not true." As avowed an anti-Communist as he had become, Gardner Jackson refused to participate in the "hysteria now enveloping the people of our country. It is precisely," he said, "what the Commies want to have happen." Unlike the incurable Robert Cruise McManus, whose red-baiting led him to the outrageous conclusion that Communist sympathizers consisted largely of intellectuals who in their youth had been "too small to play football or too funny looking to be popular with the girls," Jackson was well-intentioned. He firmly believed "in the NFU's fundamental thesis of as many families on the land owning and operating their own farms as can be at a decent living standard," and had written his letter, he said, "to protect Jim [Patton] and that thesis from prostitution by the Commies."³⁷

A year after the Patton-Jackson dispute, the National Farmers Union once again earned unwanted public attention when a major disagreement erupted between Patton and National Union Farmer editor James Elmore. The quarrel arose over Elmore's decision to publish a St. Louis Post-Dispatch article

³⁷Gardner Jackson to Robert C. McManus, March 31, 1948, and Robert C. McManus to Gardner Jackson, April 5, 1948, Box 46, Folder "Robert McManus," Jackson Papers. McManus's asinine comment about intellectuals leaves one wondering how he explained the Communist sympathies of women.

entitled "Red Capitalists, Capitalist Reds" critical of the Soviet Union. The article, and an accompanying cartoon satirizing "Russian Co-operation," were seen by Patton as "depart[ing] sharply" from Farmers Union policy. He accused Elmore of "deliberately . . . defying the present policy," and invited the editor to resign.³⁸



Elmore agreed to step down, but only after telling his side of the story in a ten-page letter mailed to leading Farmers Union officials. Elmore argued that in publishing the article he was merely trying to get Patton to clarify a

³⁸National Union Farmer, September 1, 1947, pp. 5 and 8; James G. Patton to James Elmore, September 3, 1947, Box 35, Folder "Farmers Union Correspondence 1947," Williams Papers.

vague organizational policy on foreign affairs. It was evident from the letter, however, that the Farmers Union policy, at least as Elmore saw it, was not as unclear as he claimed. He accused Patton and other national leaders of "playing footie" with the Communists and of following "a pro-communist collaborationist line." Patton's "policy of excusing Russia at every opportunity" while simultaneously "managing to impugn imperialistic motives for everything the U.S. does in the international field" led to Elmore's confused conclusion that the organization "condemn[ed] imperialism impartially." Elmore also chastised Patton for encouraging a "top-heavy concern with international affairs" that he felt diverted the Farmers Union from the more important goals of "membership, organization and education." This "save-the-worldism" Elmore equated with Eleanor Roosevelt's description of Henry Wallace as "a poor Don Quixote sweeping over Europe fighting windmills." Both efforts were futile, Elmore argued, and would lead to results as disastrous as the "tragic Chamberlain appeasement policy."³⁹

Elmore's spurious argument that he was merely seeking clarification of policy was undermined by actions he took after resigning from the Union. Adopting the pen-name J.A. Spengler, he wrote a brief but bitter book

³⁹James Elmore to James G. Patton, September 9, 1947, and James Elmore to Aubrey Williams, September 9, 1947, Box 35, Folder "Farmers Union Correspondence 1947," Williams Papers.

entitled The Truth About the Farmers Union. Order forms for the book described it as dealing with the "confused leftwing leadership" of the Union who were "lost in their own Socialist smog and tangled in the Communist web of subversion."⁴⁰ Elmore also penned "Communist Foot in the Farmer's Door," a manuscript that accused the National Union Farmer of reading "more like a camouflaged, carbon copy of the Communist Daily Worker than a farm paper," spoke of Jim Patton as "burdened with a Marxian complex," and argued that the Denver headquarters of the Farmers Union was "safely weighted in favor of the fellow travelers."⁴¹

With only Nebraska's Chris Milius raising mild objections, the Farmers Union board of directors backed Patton in the dispute. Board chairman Glenn Talbott issued a statement criticizing Elmore's red-baiting tactics and calling for organizational unity. But despite his plea that "communism was not enough of an issue to be worth fighting about," the Farmers Union had not seen the last of the internal controversies spawned by the

⁴⁰J.A. Spengler to Mrs. Frank P. Leo, March 28, 1956, Series XIV, Box 2, Folder #2, National Farmers Union Papers. Order forms for the book were found in Series IV, Box 4, Folder #8, National Farmers Union Papers. The book itself has been missing from the stacks of the National Agricultural Library for at least a year, and I have been unable to locate another copy.

⁴¹Cited in Congressional Record, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, September 7, 1950, pp. 14292-14293.

organization's position on American foreign policy.⁴²

Wisconsin president Ken Hones, who ironically had proposed the Board of Directors' vote of confidence for Jim Patton as a sign of organizational harmony,⁴³ was himself a major contributor to another Farmers Union fracas over the issue of Communism. Proudly bearing the title of the organization's "No. 1 red-baiter," Hones insisted that Communists had "nearly bored clear through the Farmers Union." He told Patton in August of 1950 that "this problem is far more serious than you have any idea of" and urged him to "get busy and clean house." What Hones wanted was a change in the constitution that barred Communists from membership in the Union. The proposal had been rejected at the organization's national convention in 1948, and it was rejected again in 1950. For Hones, the 1950 convention was also disappointing for its adoption of the Stockholm Peace Petition and for its refusal to re-seat him as a member of the board of directors. Both actions, he told South Dakota president Paul Opsahl, were "part of the planning by the commies at the convention."⁴⁴

⁴²Daily Worker, September 18, 1947, p. 8; Rocky Mountain News, September 16, 1947, p. 20; William C. Pratt, "Glenn J. Talbott, the Farmers Union, and American Liberalism after World War II," North Dakota History LV (Winter, 1988), p. 6.

⁴³Rocky Mountain News, September 16, 1947, p. 20

⁴⁴K.W. Hones to Paul W. Opsahl, August 14, 1950, and K.W. Hones to James G. Patton, August 10, 1950, Box 1, Folder 3, Kenneth W. Hones Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; William C. Pratt, "American

Although Hones could not convince the national organization to bar Communists from membership, he did succeed in adding the prohibition to the constitution of the Wisconsin Farmers Union. The move coincided with a serious decline in the state organization's membership, and critics charged that Hones' "campaign of red-baiting" and his "purging of a considerable number of members for their political beliefs" were to blame. In an "open letter" to Hones, seventy-three Wisconsin residents praised the National Farmers Union for "turn[ing] its back on the present anti-Communist hysteria" and for "opposing the cold war policy," and called on Hones to follow suit "by eliminating the discriminatory provision." In his response, Hones wrote that "there is little doubt that this letter has been promoted by the communists in this state." Acting on his belief that "there is no place for communists in our organization," he gave each of the seventy-three signers one week to issue a retraction, after which time he would pass the names on to the F.B.I. As for the charge that the anti-Communist provision had led to the decline in membership, Hones characterized it as "a typical Communist trick of distorting facts to fit their line of propaganda." The drop in membership, he said, was caused not by the prohibition against Communists, but by an increase in dues and by the failure of the local unions

Liberalism," p. 9.

to actively seek out new members.⁴⁵

All of the assaults on the Farmers Union drew local and state attention, and most of them created a stir nationwide as well. But none got quite the publicity as that begun by New Hampshire senator Styles Bridges when on September 7, 1950, he openly attacked the Farmers Union on the floor of the U.S. Senate. His comments came in the midst of debate on the anti-subversive McCarran bill, a piece of legislation that along with the Mundt-Nixon bill had been consistently opposed by the Farmers Union as typical of a "manufactured jingoistic patriotism" that "actively interfered with the fulfillment of the best in American traditions." Specifically, the Farmers Union charged that such "repressive" legislation not only "place[d] a muzzle on [domestic] freedom of discussion," but also reinforced the Truman administration's "reversal on foreign policy." "The one," Fred Stover argued, "is the child of the other."⁴⁶

⁴⁵"An Open Letter" and "Statement of F.U. State Executive Board, October 12, 1950," Box 9, Folder #2, Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America, Wisconsin Division Records, 1924-1969, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, hereafter cited as Wisconsin Farmers Union Papers; "Statement of the Wisconsin Farmers Union State Executive Board Approved at the Board's Meeting in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, on April 13, 1950," Box 9, Folder 7, Talbott Family Papers, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

⁴⁶Address of F.W. Stover to Australian Peace Congress, Melbourne, Australia, April 19, 1950, Stover Papers; Statement of James G. Patton, March 31, 1950, U.S. Congress, House, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, Hearings on Legislation to Outlaw Certain Un-American and Subversive Activities:

For two hours, Senator Bridges walked his colleagues through a detailed history of "a carefully planned Communist effort to infiltrate and take over" the National Farmers Union. His evidence included tales of Farmers Union affiliations with individuals and organizations that, "according to the House Committee on Un-American Activities," were either Communist dominated or Communist fronts. These included Hal Ware, Ella Reeve Bloor, Lem Harris, the American Peace Mobilization, Farm Research Incorporated, the World Youth Congress, and the Marshall Fund. Bridges also argued that many of the key leaders of the Farmers Union were themselves either Communists or Communist dupes. Included in this list were Glenn Talbott, Fred Stover, education director Gladys Talbott Edwards, Jim Patton, and, most notably, Archie Wright. Patton's unwillingness to "get rid of Archie Wright" following Wright's unsuccessful suit against the Farm Journal and Robert Cruise McManus, struck Bridges as particularly revealing. The favored treatment afforded Wright, when contrasted with the purging and isolating of such individuals as Gardner Jackson, James Elmore, Ken Hones, and Chris

Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities, p. 2353; Address by F.W. Stover, New Party Convention, Mitchell, South Dakota, June 27, 1948, pp. 3-4, Stover Papers. Other examples of Farmers Union opposition to anti-subversive legislation include the following, all of which can be found in the Stover Papers: National Farmers Union press release on "Democratic Liberties," March 25, 1947; Esten L. Bolland, "A Challenge to Farmers Union Members," no date; and Fred W. Stover, "Let the Truth Prevail," no date.

Milius, was judged by Bridges as the most convincing evidence of Communist infiltration of the Union. Criticizing Patton and his organization for seeking "to persuade the youth of our country, and adults, too, that nothing is right with the United States of America," Senator Bridges concluded that the Communist effort to bore its way into the Farmers Union "ha[d] achieved considerable, if not complete, success."⁴⁷

The New Hampshire senator's lengthy lecture was interrupted twice by Senator Hubert Humphrey. The Minnesota Democrat strongly protested "any aspersions being cast upon the Farmers Union" in his state, but was even more enraged that the United States Congress was being used as a forum for irresponsible charges. Asked by Bridges how he would explain the refusal of the Farmers Union to pass a resolution barring Communist membership in the organization, Humphrey responded that "there are many persons who do not believe in adopting such resolutions" and that "the fever for such resolutions seems to be stronger in the Congress than in any other place in the United States." Noting that the Congressional charges of subversion against the Farmers Union followed quickly on the heels of similar accusations against Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Secretary of

⁴⁷Congressional Record, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, September 7, 1950, pp. 14276-14296.

Interior Oscar Chapman, Humphrey called for an end to the "spurious reasoning" that concluded that because a person disagreed with you he was a Communist. "I submit," he claimed, "that the irresponsible charges which have been made in the Eighty-first congress, second session, have done more to undermine the faith of the American people in representative government than the Communist Party will ever be able to do."⁴⁸

While Humphrey's response to Bridges was the most immediate, South Dakota's Karl Mundt, North Dakota's Milton Young, Montana's Jim Murray, and Oregon's Wayne Morse all came to the defense of the Farmers Union in the days that followed.⁴⁹ That the rabidly anti-Communist Senator Mundt would challenge Bridges's statements was a testimonial both to the weakness of the charges and, as Alonzo Hamby has argued, to the strength of the Farmers Union in the Plains states.⁵⁰

The most effective of the many challenges to Bridges came from William Langer. In a presentation as lengthy as that initiated by Bridges, the North Dakota Republican praised the National Farmers Union as a "strong, patriotic organization" whose program represented, in a complete reversal of

⁴⁸Congressional Record, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, September 7, 1950, pp. 14283-14286 and 14322-14323.

⁴⁹Congressional Record, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, September 7, 1950, pp. 14317-14318, September 12, 1950, pp. 14570-14573.

⁵⁰Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, p. 409.

Bridges's claims, "one of the greatest bulwarks against communism." Langer particularly applauded the Union's efforts in battling corporate monopolies and in fighting for the rights of America's family-sized farms.⁵¹

The support the Farmers Union received from Langer and his colleagues was indicative of the belief that Styles Bridges's charges were, as Senator Humphrey argued, "nothing more than warmed-over dried biscuits--the same old accusations coming out again and again in an effort to frighten the American people."⁵² Humphrey's assessment was accurate, for Bridges offered nothing in his address that had not already been hammered upon by Robert McManus, Gardner Jackson, and James Elmore. In dredging up the results of Archie Wright's libel suit and in using them as the cornerstone of his accusations, Bridges repeated the process of deliberately misconstruing the case results for the benefit of his argument. Like his predecessors in the task of Communist finger pointing, the New Hampshire senator erroneously concluded that the court had found Wright guilty of membership in the Communist Party, when in fact all the jury had done was exonerate McManus and Farm Journal from the charge of libelous intent.

The Bridges attack on the Farmers Union cannot, however, be dismissed

⁵¹Congressional Record, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, September 7, 1950, pp. 14310-14379.

⁵²Congressional Record, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, September 7, 1950, p. 14323.

as merely "warmed-over dried biscuits." It was a rehashing of previously stated charges, but it was also much more. Digging into the story behind the speech, Farmers Union officials discovered that the "carefully planned . . . effort" Senator Bridges had accused the Communists of constructing had been duplicated by Farmers Union opponents bent on discrediting both the organization and its programs. As more and more details surfaced, even Ken Hones's Wisconsin Farmers Union News began to wonder "how much conniving is going on in back of the scenes among the smear brigade."⁵³

The Union's immediate reaction to Bridges's speech was to criticize the attack as "a disservice to the cause of truth and decency" that resorted "to the tactics made infamous by totalitarian dictators in Italy, Germany and Russia." Issued two days after Bridges made the charges, the statement of the National Farmers Union board of directors also reaffirmed the organization's commitments to family farmers and to "genuine international collaboration to build a peaceful and prosperous world."⁵⁴ In offering the statement to the press, Jim Patton rebuked Bridges for "vomiting the innuendoes of irresponsible writers on the floor of the senate." Arguing that Archie Wright was "as far from being a Communist as anyone could be,"

⁵³Wisconsin Farmers Union News, October 9, 1950, p. 4.

⁵⁴"Statement of the National Farmers Union," Box 36, Folder "National Farmers Union 1950-1956," Hickenlooper Papers.

Patton elaborated on what he felt were the four reasons behind the speech. Surprisingly, none of the four had anything to do with anti-Communism. Instead, Patton suggested that the Republican Party, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and "wheat merchants, oil men and insurance interests" jealous of the Union's successful co-op business had been behind what was not only an attack on the Farmers Union but also on Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan and his program for the nation's farmers.⁵⁵

Senator Bridges had, in fact, included Secretary Brannan in his September 7th comments. After concluding his direct attack on the Farmers Union, Bridges began the last minutes of his harangue by observing that "the story of the Communist infiltration of the Farmers Union would not be complete without some mention of the close ties between the Farmers Union and the United States Department of Agriculture." He then launched into a brief history of the Agriculture Department and of the Farm Security Administration that portrayed the agencies as infiltrated with Communist agitators. It was no surprise, he concluded, that such a subversively influenced branch of government would wholeheartedly adopt a dangerous program like the Brannan Plan--a plan, he said, that had actually originated within the Farmers Union, and which could just as easily have been called

⁵⁵Denver Post, September 10, 1950, p. 3A.

"the Talbott plan, or the [Lem] Harris plan--or possibly the Stalin Plan."⁵⁶

Bridges followed these intemperate comments with an observation that even more vividly tied the attack on the Farmers Union to its support of the Brannan Plan and inadvertently pointed the way toward the organization at least partially responsible for his accusations. The New Hampshire senator was incensed that National Security Resources Board chairman Stuart Symington, in naming the agricultural members of his advisory board, had selected Jim Patton and National Grange president Albert Goss, but had "passed over" American Farm Bureau Federation president Allan Kline in favor of an Ohio Farm Bureau official, D. Murray Lincoln. "Mr. Lincoln's selection," Bridges mourned, was "a direct slap by the administration at the Farm Bureau. Is this because the Farm Bureau has strongly opposed the Brannan Plan?"⁵⁷

The involvement of the Farm Bureau in Senator Bridges's assault on the Farmers Union was widely discussed in Farmers Union circles in the weeks following the speech. The Iowa Union Farmer noted that Bridges was the perfect choice for delivery of the attack. With no Farmers Union division in

⁵⁶Congressional Record, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, September 7, 1950, pp. 14285-14286.

⁵⁷Congressional Record, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, September 7, 1950, pp. 14286-14287.

New Hampshire, he was free to hurl his charges without fear of electoral retribution.⁵⁸ His close personal friendship with Allan Kline and his position as former secretary of the New Hampshire Farm Bureau added to the suggestion of a Bureau-planned assault on the Union. Kline's endorsement of the Chamber of Commerce-Time Corporation proposal to move 3.8 million farmers out of agriculture, the Farm Bureau's outspoken opposition to the Brannan Plan, and the Bureau's circulation of reprints of Bridges's speech only added to the speculation.⁵⁹

Even more striking was the remarkable similarity between the Bridges speech and one delivered eight days later by Iowa Farm Bureau president E. Howard Hill. Speaking to the annual meeting of Iowa's county Farm Bureaus, Hill repeated Bridges's denunciation of the Stockholm Peace Petition and his charges of Communist infiltration of the Department of Agriculture. He summarized his view of the Farmers Union with the observation that the organization "consistently advocates Communist causes, parrots Communist propaganda and refuses to denounce Communistic activities." He concluded

⁵⁸It was often suggested that Nebraska's Senator Kenneth Wherry had first been approached to give the speech but had declined the invitation. The presence of a Farmers Union affiliate in Nebraska, even one critical of the national organization's position on foreign affairs, may have convinced Senator Wherry of the inadvisability of delivering the speech. See, for example, Iowa Union Farmer, December, 1950, p. 4.

⁵⁹Iowa Union Farmer, September 16, 1950, p. 1, and December, 1950, p. 4.

with the comment that he was "making no accusations" but was merely "present[ing] the facts to the farmers of Iowa and let[ting] them draw their own conclusions." In his speech before Congress, Senator Bridges had opened with the charges that "the Farmers Union . . . consistently espouses Communist causes, parrots Communist propaganda, and refuses to denounce Communists or their activities. . . ." He had ended by saying, "I have stayed away from charges. I have presented the evidence." Only an extraordinary coincidence could have produced two so similar speeches without collaboration.⁶⁰

A debate over the actual origins of Bridges's vituperative address was greatly intensified, and the speech itself took on even greater significance, when columnist Drew Pearson on September 28, 1950, announced that the author was Alfred Kohlberg, publisher of Freeman magazine and a leading figure in the China Lobby. Articles in his magazine followed precisely the arguments laid out by Bridges, both in their criticisms of the Brannan Plan and in their charges of Communist infiltration of the Farmers Union and the Agriculture Department. That Kohlberg was also an ally of Henry Luce in the

⁶⁰E. Howard Hill, address to the annual meeting of the county Farm Bureaus, September 15, 1950, Box 9, Folder 5, Hill Papers; Congressional Record, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, September 7, 1950, pp. 14277 and 14287.

effort to restore Chiang Kai-shek to power in China was taken by Farmers Union officials as undeniable evidence of the "unholy alliance" they had spoken of for years.⁶¹

Drew Pearson's claim that Alfred Kohlberg wrote Styles Bridges's address was eventually proven wrong. But the identity of the actual author reinforced even more the Farmers Union position that a great deal of "conniving" had taken place behind the scenes. In what surely smacked of conspiratorial intent, it was revealed in the May, 1951, Farmers Union libel suit against the Utah Farm Bureau that the writer was none other than Robert Cruise McManus. The "Communist Beachhead" author testified that on the advice of a New Jersey acquaintance he had approached Bridges with the idea for the speech and had then written it when the New Hampshire senator approved of the plan. The Farmers Union later speculated that the friend had been Kohlberg, but the charge has not been proven. Whether he was directly involved or not, however, it is clear that Kohlberg's views were consistently in line with those of McManus. In the aftermath of Bridges's speech, Kohlberg's Freeman magazine published a McManus article entitled "The Red Mole." It praised the "accuracy and thoroughness of Bridges's documentation"

⁶¹Iowa Union Farmer, October 21, 1950, p. 1. See, for example, Louis Bromfield, "Back of the Brannan Plan," The Freeman 1 (April 9, 1951), pp. 425-428.

and criticized both Senators Humphrey and Langer for supporting the "disastrous experiment with hooded socialism."⁶²

While the involvement of the Farm Bureau in Bridges's attack on the Farmers Union is undeniable, Robert McManus's admission during the Utah libel case that "politics was involved" in the writing of the speech raised speculations that the Farm Bureau had not been alone in its desire to impugn the Union. In presenting his annual report to the North Dakota Farmers Union two months after Bridges's address, Glenn Talbott directly accused the Republican Party of participating in the attack. With no agricultural program to rival the Brannan Plan and fearful of losing the farm vote in both 1950 and 1952, the Republicans, Talbott charged, set out to "discredit and destroy" both the Brannan Plan and the Farmers Union by labelling each as Communistic. The "opening gun" of the Republican attack was a March 21, 1950, speech in Lincoln, Nebraska, by Republican National Committee chairman Guy George Gabrielson. The address, introduced into the Congressional Record by Nebraska's Senator Hugh Butler, read like a condensed version of what Styles Bridges had to offer six months later.

⁶²National Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 1; Farmers Union Defense Committee, "The Inside Story of the Outside Interference in the Iowa Farmers Union," 1951 newsletter, Box 3, Folder 6, U.S. Farmers Association Records; Robert Cruise McManus, "The Red Mole," The Freeman ! (October 16, 1950), pp. 54-56.

Gabrielson praised the "great farm leader, Allan Kline," lambasted the Brannan Plan as "an instrument for the destruction of free farmers, framed by the radicals who surround your Secretary of Agriculture," and resurrected the charges against Archie Wright as a "card-carrying Communist."⁶³

It is clear, then, that the Bridges attack on the Farmers Union, as well as the other assaults on the organization's loyalty, were welcomed, if not in fact participated in, by a number of powerful elements. President Truman, again to his credit, did not have a hand in any of the onslaughts and, according to Jim Patton, "voiced his indignation at the pattern of mean slander" practiced against the Union. Nevertheless, the attacks took their toll. At least one major newspaper called for Patton to clean out the "card-carrying Communists" and "fellow-travelers," and one Union official noted that the criticisms "put a stop to any organizing" in Farmers Union states. Eight months after Bridges made his comments, the New York division of the Union, the one headed by the much-maligned Archie Wright, was still feeling the effects, as its chief rival in the state persisted in circulating booklets summarizing the charges made by the New Hampshire senator.⁶⁴

⁶³National Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 1; Annual Report, Glenn J. Talbott, President, North Dakota Farmers Union, November 15, 1950, pp. 20-23, Folder #555, President Truman's Official Files; Congressional Record, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, March 30, 1950, pp. A2364-A2365.

⁶⁴James G. Patton, Address to South Dakota Farmers Union Convention, October 5, 1950, p. 1, Box 24, Folder #6, Patton Papers; Denver Post,

On the surface, the Farmers Union weathered the storm of protest well. Referring to the Bridges attack as the result of "political opportunism plus little minds," Jim Patton maintained that the Farmers Union would continue to be "an organization of dissent." It would persist, he said, in challenging those "who say we must accept totalitarian allies of any hue" and would reject the belief "that atom bombs are the only answer to other ideologies."⁶⁵ But beneath the public image of Farmers Union solidarity, cracks had begun to form. The pressure of the seemingly constant criticisms weakened the resolve of some of the organization's key figures, including president Jim Patton. His harsh critiques of American foreign policy were by late 1950 frequently muted, if not entirely absent, and some of the organization's other leading spokesmen openly questioned Patton's dedication to the Farmers Union as "an organization of dissent."

Oddly enough, the event that brought the opposing camps into open battle actually took place two and a half months before Senator Bridges's September, 1950, address. Harry Truman's decision in June of that year to send American troops to Korea, and Jim Patton's surprising determination to

September 10, 1950, p. 1A; Homer Ayres to author, April 24, 1992, p. 4; Archie Wright, "'To All Officers and Delegates," May 15, 1951, Box 1, Folder "Delegate Letters, 1948-1951," New York Milk Shed Records.

⁶⁵"Statement on Farmers Union Policy for the Des Moines Register by James G. Patton," Box 26, Folder #6, Patton Papers.

support the President in that endeavor, brought to the surface the Union's long-festering internal divisions over American foreign policy. The organizational rift that followed Patton's controversial decision to back Harry Truman in the Korean War severely crippled the National Farmers Union and began both the national organization and its protesting affiliates on the road to being casualties of the Cold War.

Chapter Five

Expensive Uncertainty: The Added Costs of War

Studies of American involvement in the Korean War have underestimated the impact of that conflict on domestic American society. Focusing on political and military implications, historians have either ignored or minimized the social and economic changes that were a direct result of President Truman's decision to intervene in Korea in the summer of 1950. Typical of the profession's approach was a 1975 Truman Library conference organized to provide a 25-year perspective on the war. The participants, conference organizer Francis Heller later wrote, discussed Korea almost exclusively "as a world rather than a domestic event."¹ Even in sessions specifically designed to examine the effect of the war on the homefront, the conversations invariably drifted toward military and political affairs. When Richard Leopold concluded the conference with recommendations for further study, he predictably omitted any consideration of domestic implications beyond the military aspects of selective service, the role of reservists, and

¹Francis H. Heller, ed., The Korean War: A 25-Year Perspective (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), p. 9.

the status of conscientious objectors.²

On the rare occasions when domestic concerns have somehow worked themselves into Korean War discussions, the result has been a consensus focusing on three almost universally accepted tenets. The first of these was that the American people initially spoke in one unanimous voice in supporting the sending of troops to Korea, and that opposition to the war developed only with the introduction of Chinese forces, the debate over General MacArthur's plans to widen the conflict, and the deadlock in truce negotiations that dominated the last two years of the war. The second tenet, surfacing particularly in works comparing American involvement in Korea with the nation's later experience in Vietnam, was that whatever opposition there was to Korea came almost entirely from the political right. As Alonzo Hamby told the Truman Library conference, "Korean War protestors waved the American flag; Vietnam protestors frequently burned it."³ Finally, while not completely denying the significance of the Korean War as an event in America's history, historians have generally accepted John Wiltz's conclusion that it was "not a particularly traumatic interlude" in the nation's life. The domestic economy supposedly thrived, and returning soldiers, Wiltz argued, "slipped with comparative ease back into their

²Heller, The Korean War, pp. 209-224.

³Heller, The Korean War, p. 170.

former lifestyles."⁴

Each of these three suppositions holds a certain grain of truth. Chinese entry into the war, MacArthur's expansionist plans, and prolonged negotiations all heightened opposition to Korea, and much of that opposition was directed by conservative Republicans angered at President Truman's earlier failure in "losing" China to the Communists. There was even a segment of American society for whom the Korean War was, as Wiltz suggested, not "particularly traumatic" and who even benefitted financially from U.S. participation in the conflict.

Studies of Korea that avoid the temptation to revert to military and

⁴Heller, The Korean War, p. 156. The view that initial support for the war decreased with later events is also put forward in: Rosemary Foot, The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Robert J. Donovan, Nemesis: Truman and Johnson in the Coils of War in Asia (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984); Bernard Brodie, War and Politics (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1973); and Park, "American Involvement in the Korean War," pp. 249-264. The Vietnam analogy is stressed in: John E. Mueller, War, Presidents and Public Opinion (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973); Frederick D. Herzon et. al., "Personality and Public Opinion: The Case of Authoritarianism, Prejudice, and Support for the Korean and Vietnam Wars," Polity XI (Fall, 1978), pp. 92-113; Andre Modigliani, "Hawks and Doves, Isolationism and Public Distrust: An Analysis of Public Opinion on Military Policy," American Political Science Review LXVI (September, 1972), pp. 960-978; and Shmuel Sandler, "The Impact of Protracted Peripheral Wars on the American Domestic System," Jerusalem Journal of International Relations III (Summer, 1978), pp. 27-53. The view of the Korean War as economically fruitful is presented in Donald R. McCoy, The Presidency of Harry Truman (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984).

diplomatic topics produce a different image of the intensity and direction of internal opposition to the war. Steven Geitschier's 1977 observation that, "From the very beginning, a significant portion of the American people had dissented from this war," and Matthew Mantell's 1973 argument that this opposition covered a wider range of the political spectrum than is usually granted, come closer to describing the American public's reaction to Korea.⁵ A focus on domestic implications also uncovers a less optimistic picture of the American economy in which family farmers in particular were victimized by the growing power of what would one day be termed the military-industrial complex. Faced with an uncertain future created in part by the Truman administration's determination to pursue the anti-Communist crusade in Korea, America's small farmers spoke out in vocal opposition to a war that they saw as producing unnecessary manpower shortages, inequitable corporate profits, and a diminishing emphasis on government-sponsored programs for agriculture. As the leading spokesman for America's smaller farmers, the National Farmers Union was most visible in stating this opposition. Its protests, however, were supported by other

⁵Steven P. Geitschier, "Limited War and the Homefront: Ohio During the Korean War," Ph.D. dissertation (Ohio State University, 1977), pp. 218-219; Matthew E. Mantell, "Opposition to the Korean War: A Study in American Dissent," Ph.D. dissertation (New York University, 1973).

agrarian interests similarly concerned that the conflict in Korea was detrimental to the economic well-being of the nation's family farms.

The initial reaction of America's agrarian community to President Truman's introduction of troops into Korea was one of uncertainty. Leading farm publications featured a number of articles all conveying the same concern. What affect, they characteristically asked, would war in Korea have on the nation's farms? Should crop rotations be changed? Should more land or newer machinery be purchased? Should crops be sold immediately or held for possibly higher wartime prices? In short, what should farmers do either to avoid any negative impact or to guarantee themselves of any possible benefits?⁶

The anxiety was caused in part by the inability to predict how long the war would last. Estimates ranged from the Ohio Farmer's reassuring belief that "there will not be war" to the North Dakota Union Farmer's gloomy prediction that a long war was "certain." But whether the Korean War itself would stretch out for years or be over in a matter of months was

⁶Typical articles included: "No Need for Panic," Ohio Farmer CCVI (July 15, 1950), p. 6; "If We're Going to Have War," Wallace's Farmer and Iowa Homestead LXXV (July 15, 1950), p. 20; "Farm Market Hit By War Scare," Wallace's Farmer and Iowa Homestead LXXV (July 15, 1950), p. 44; "War, Farmers and Korea," Farm Front, August, 1950, p. 1; "Will Korea Change Your Plans?," Farm Journal LXXIV (August, 1950), p. 31; and "Threats of War—Here is How They Affect Your Farming," Successful Farming XLVIII (September, 1950), p. 35.

overshadowed by widespread agrarian acceptance of what Successful Farming labelled a "very clear . . . fact." The United States, the journal argued after two months of fighting, was "destined to live for some time in a state of war preparedness, or in actual war." Three months after its optimistic prediction of no war, even the Ohio Farmer agreed that "now that the cold war has become warm" the nation would be involved in "an economic, spiritual and military struggle" for many years to come.⁷

The prospect of this prolonged conflict providing a boost to the agrarian economy was frequently discussed in the early weeks of the war. Recalling the economically beneficial results brought about by American entrance into World War Two, some farm publications speculated on a repeat performance of "farm prosperity through war."⁸ Government figures released in the August, 1950, issue of The Agricultural Situation encouraged this optimistic interpretation. The "proposed increase in military expenditures" generated by Korea, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics publication argued, would be "a powerful new force in the economy" that would benefit

⁷Ohio Farmer CCVI (July 15, 1950), p. 6; North Dakota Union Farmer, July 17, 1950, p. 1; Successful Farming XLVIII (September, 1950), p. 35; Ohio Farmer CCVI (October 21, 1950), p. 3.

⁸Farm Journal and Michigan State's "Farm Economics" letter were cited by Facts for Farmers (October, 1950, p. 2) as proposing that "farm prosperity will be proportionate to the amount of fighting" done in Korea.

farmers as well as the rest of American society. In fact, the study announced, farmers had done quite well in the first month of the Korean conflict. The index of prices farmers received had increased by six and a half percent from mid-June to mid-July, but even more significantly, these prices were "moving up more than those they pay." As a result, "farmers' prices exceeded parity in July for the first time since April 1949."⁹

Farmers were also encouraged by the existence of agricultural surpluses. Huge reserves of wheat, corn, and cotton, which until Korea had been judged by many Americans as an example of farmers holding the public hostage for the sake of higher prices, were now no longer considered a problem. As the Farm Journal observed in August, suddenly the nation was taking "comfort" in the fact that such surpluses were available in a time of war. Farmers, too, were encouraged by the knowledge that a wartime economy would presumably guarantee equitable prices for the once troubling surplus crops.¹⁰

The optimism, however, was short-lived. A month after releasing its promising figures, The Agricultural Situation announced that "the index of prices received by farmers rose only one and a half percent from mid-July to mid-August," and prices paid by farmers had caught up to those they

⁹The Agricultural Situation XXXIV (August, 1950), pp. 13-14.

¹⁰Farm Journal LXXIV (August, 1950), p. 31.

received. Within a few months, industrial prices had greatly outdistanced agricultural prices, and America's farmers, once temporarily buoyed by promises of increased profits, complained that they once again were paying considerably more for goods and equipment than they were receiving from the marketing of their crops. Even the surpluses were now seen more as a problem than as a blessing, for as Wallace's Farmer and Iowa Homestead remarked in August, "It's easy to pile up reserves, [but] hard to figure sound ways of releasing [a crop] on the market when it's needed. It's also hard to find a place to put 1,200 million extra bushels in a war reserve."¹¹

The dark economic news was accompanied by the realization that analogies to World War Two offered false hopes for agrarian prosperity. The August 19 issue of Ohio Farmer cautioned against comparing the present situation with the one in 1941, reminding its readers that while the Second World War had been preceded by a major depression, the years before Korea had been ones of relative prosperity. As a result, the journal argued two months later, it was unlikely that agricultural prices would rise in the same impressive manner that they had in the years of World War Two. An additional consideration, one brought out in Wallace's Farmer and Iowa

¹¹The Agricultural Situation XXXIV (September, 1950), pp. 13-14; Wallace's Farmer and Iowa Homestead LXXV (August 5, 1950), p. 66.

Homestead, was that European farmers were "not yet being disturbed as in World Wars I and II," and so American farmers would not benefit from increased overseas markets.¹²

Three months into the war, agrarian spokesmen were no longer hopeful of "farm prosperity through war." Instead, as both Facts for Farmers and the North Dakota Union Farmer observed, "every step toward a war economy and every shift from 'food to guns' . . . aggravate[d] the problems of the family farmers. . . ." Higher taxes, shrinking export markets, declining per capita consumption of food, and, most significantly, increased military spending created a situation where America's farmers had become "victims" of Korean War-inflated prices. Such essential items as farm machinery, tires, and fencing materials had been, both papers observed, "marked up several times within a few months."¹³

Recognizing in the economic realities of a wartime economy the potential for agrarian unrest, the Truman administration began in October a campaign aimed at alleviating farmer concerns. Under Secretary of Agriculture Clarence J. McCormick, an Indiana-born farmer who had taken

¹²Ohio Farmer CCVI (August 19, 1950), pp. 38-39, and CCVI (October 21, 1950), p. 3; Wallace's Farmer and Iowa Homestead LXXV (August 19, 1950), p. 6.

¹³Facts for Farmers, October, 1950, p. 2; North Dakota Union Farmer, November 6, 1950, p. 2.

office a month after the beginning of the Korean War, set out on what would be an almost endless national tour in which he attempted to drum up agrarian support for the war. Aware of the record of the Farmers Union as a leading critic of U.S. foreign policy, McCormick made one of his first stops at the annual convention of the South Dakota Farmers Union in Mitchell, South Dakota. He praised the organization for its "concern with the whole broad world picture," assured its members that the government appreciated agriculture as "an essential part of our national defense against communistic aggression," and asked them to "keep on producing the food and fiber the Nation needs to meet any emergency that we may have to face."¹⁴

While he spoke to numerous farm groups in his lengthy trek across the nation, McCormick showed an acute awareness of those issues that played a key role in Farmers Union opposition to American foreign policy. He addressed the organization's concern with the "unholy alliance" between

¹⁴Biography of Clarence J. McCormick, July 27, 1950, Box 2, Folder "April-July 1950," Official Files of the Agriculture Department, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri; "Gearing Up," Talk by Under Secretary of Agriculture Clarence J. McCormick at Annual Meeting of South Dakota Farmers Union, Mitchell, South Dakota, October 5, 1950, Box 2, Folder "August-November 1950," Agriculture Department Official Files, Truman Library. Copies of both of these documents can also be found at the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland. Copies of the numerous speeches made by McCormick on his national tour can be found in Boxes 2 through 4 of the Agriculture Department Official Files and in Box 2 of the Papers of Clarence J. McCormick, also at the Truman Library.

business and the military by assuring the agricultural community of the Truman administration's insistence that "farmers need protection fully as much as industry" and that food was "as vital as ammunition." He catered his comments to the Farmers Union concern with small farms by noting President Truman's determination "that the mobilization period shall not be used as an excuse for trying to weaken the family farm pattern of agriculture in this country."¹⁵

McCormick's appeals met with only limited success, for economic reality belied his assurances that the American effort in Korea would not harm agrarian interests. As the initial boost in farm prices brought on at the beginning of the war faded into memory, farmers realized that what McCormick had predicted as a Korean War-inspired generation of "expensive uncertainty"¹⁶ would be for family farmers both more expensive and more uncertain than for the American population as a whole.

Topping the list of agrarian anxieties was the depletion of agricultural manpower brought on in part by accelerated draft calls to meet American commitments in Korea. Demobilization following World War Two had

¹⁵Clarence J. McCormick, "Gearing Up," p. 14; "How Mobilization Affects the Farmer," Talk by Under Secretary of Agriculture Clarence J. McCormick at Meeting of State Extension and Experiment Station Editors, Washington, D.C., May 7, 1951, Box 3, Folder "April-June 1951," Agriculture Department Official Files, Truman Library.

¹⁶Clarence J. McCormick, "How Mobilization Affects the Farmer," p. 2.

dropped the nation's military strength to 1.5 million, and although a draft law had been on the books since 1948 no one had actually been conscripted. With voluntary enlistments running over 30,000 a month, and with the nation at peace, the Selective Service System was, as Glenn Talbott characterized it in an annual report to the North Dakota Farmers Union, "in a very real sense [as] demobilized" as the military itself. To most of the registrants under the system, Talbott concluded, "the probabilities of a call to active service... seemed so remote..."¹⁷ The fighting in Korea changed this. Congressional conferees promptly extended the 1948 Selective Service Act through July of 1951, and monthly draft calls aimed at rebuilding the military to 3 million men began in September.¹⁸

The re-activation of the draft was particularly devastating to family farmers. Governmental and agricultural leaders on both the state and national levels were flooded with letters from older or disabled farmers convinced that the drafting of their sons or of other hired laborers would

¹⁷Glenn Talbott, "Annual Report," November 7, 1951, p. 12, North Dakota Farmers Union Papers, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota.

¹⁸Selective Service II (July, 1952), p. 1; U.S. Selective Service System, Selective Service Under the 1948 Act: June 24, 1948-July 9, 1950 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951), pp. 136-137; U.S. Selective Service System, Selective Service Under the 1948 Act Extended: July 9, 1950-June 19, 1951 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 42.

force them to abandon their homes. Typical was the situation of a physically disabled South Dakota farmer in his fifties whose operation of a thousand acre spread relied solely on the work of his only son, a twenty-one year old who had received his draft notice. A North Dakota farmer's wife, in a letter to Glenn Talbott, described basically the same difficulty. Her twenty year old son, who had also received his draft call, was the sole means of economic survival not only for her and her husband, but also for the boy's great aunt and uncle, both of whom were over seventy years old. Wisconsin Farmers Union president Kenneth Hones argued that the problem was particularly acute in the dairy regions of the nation where, he wrote in a letter to President Truman, "thousands of 65-year old dairy farmers, along with their wives, [were] struggling to keep 50 or 60 head of dairy cattle together for the boy when he comes home."¹⁹

The reaction of farmers to the drafting of farm boys ranged from the extreme anger expressed by one Kansas farmer who challenged the

¹⁹Paul Opsahl to Charles Brannan, March 15, 1951, Box 2006, Folder "Military Service January 1-April 6," Record Group 16 (General Correspondence); Mrs. Sever Gilbertson to Glenn J. Talbott, January 12, 1951, Box 9, Folder 17, Talbott Family Papers; K.W. Hones to Harry Truman, December 7, 1951, Box 1974, Folder "Employment 1-1," Record Group 16 (General Correspondence). In addition to the numerous such letters in both the Talbott Family Papers and in the Secretary of Agriculture Records at the National Archives, impressive collections are also located in the Wint Smith and Frank Carlson Papers at the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka.

government "gestapo" to "come out and try working from 4 a.m. until 10:00 at nite instead of drafting all our farm boys," to the more measured and insightful observation of a North Dakota farmer who suggested that "if more boys were left on farms to help produce food, we could send to foreign countries corn, wheat and meat which would do as much good to write the peace as sending so much lead and guns." Kenneth Hones put the relationship between draft procedures and U.S. foreign policy in perspective when he wondered in a letter to Secretary Brannan, "What sense is there to talk about land reform in India or Korea to lick Communism when we are destroying our own family type farmers?" The anger evident in these observations occasionally spilled over into physical protests, as when 250 farm people in Frederic, Wisconsin staged an anti-draft rally and issued a resolution protesting the "indiscriminate drafting of farmers and essential farm labor. . . ."²⁰

For Jim Patton and other members of the National Farmers Union, the problem with Selective Service was not that it was "indiscriminate," but that it particularly targeted small farmers. In a February, 1951, letter to

²⁰Fred W. Heine to Wint Smith, July 17, 1951, Box 25, Folder "Draft," Smith Papers; William H. Martin to Milton Young, January 24, 1951, Box 9, Folder 17, Talbott Family Papers; Kenneth Hones to Charles Brannan, January 16, 1952, Box 2099, Folder "Military Service January 1-February 12," Record Group 16 (General Correspondence); "Draft Hits Family Farm Hardest," GTA Digest, April, 1952, p. 26.

Kansas congressman Wint Smith, Patton argued that the system "almost inevitably work[ed] to weaken the family farmer as compared to the big farm operators." Given a choice, he told Smith, "between the son of a small farm operator, however much he is needed on the farm, and the hired man on a large agricultural operation, the decision almost invariably goes to the bigger operation." North Dakota Farmers Union member LeRoy Schonberger offered the same opinion when he wrote to Glenn Talbott that, "When it came to drafting they took the boys from the smaller farms first because, as they put it, 'They weren't needed as bad.'"²¹

Because they were more vulnerable than larger agribusinesses to the affects of the draft, small family farms were more adversely affected by the workings of Selective Service. It was not, however, because they were specifically targeted. Instead, family farms were victimized by a draft registration system organized around intentionally vague guidelines and manned by individuals whose memories of World War Two generated an unwillingness to grant deferments to any farmers, large or small.

The anti-farmer sentiment of the Selective Service System was a product of the Tydings Amendment, a law passed as part of the Selective

²¹Jim Patton to Wint Smith, February 14, 1951, Box 25, Folder "Draft," Smith Papers; LeRoy Schonberger to Glenn J. Talbott, January 12, 1951, Box 9, Folder 17, Talbott Family Papers.

Training and Service Act of 1942. Deferring from military service everyone "necessary to and regularly engaged in an agricultural occupation or endeavor essential to the war effort," the amendment had produced, at its peak in March of 1944, over 1,700,000 agricultural deferments. While the necessities of war had dropped this number to just over 250,000 near war's end, even that figure was eight times higher than deferments granted for all other occupational categories combined.²²

The resentment created by the Tydings amendment showed itself in the attitudes of local draft boards, which were often dominated by large numbers of World War Two veterans who adopted a punitive approach toward requests for agricultural deferments. "They understandably have the feeling," Patton wrote to Wint Smith, "that if the person being considered is physically fit, then he ought to go to war just like they did a few years before." One North Dakota farmer was reportedly told by his local board that since "the town boys won the last war, . . . the farm boys will have to win this one." The issue also extended beyond the draft boards and into public debate, with one side observing that "some communities have unfairly

²²Albert A. Blum, "The Farmer, the Army and the Draft," Agricultural History XXXVIII (January, 1964), p. 35; George Q. Flynn, Lewis B. Hershey, Mr. Selective Service (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp. 112-115.

placed a social stigma on these farm boys" and the other charging that government policy had made the farm "a grand place to creep for deferments."²³

The skepticism toward agricultural deferments was shared by the director of the Selective Service System, General Lewis B. Hershey. Although he frequently cited his own personal farming background, and although he insisted that in World War Two he had "bent over backwards to help farmers," his recent biographer accurately concluded that Hershey believed that, "Farm deferments [in World War Two] had been used in a disgraceful manner to protect young healthy boys." Hershey had actively fought passage of the Tydings Amendment and had told the House Military Affairs Committee in February of 1942 that, "We cannot defer every farmer, every farmer's son, and every farmhand merely because the individual happens to be engaged in the occupation of farming."²⁴ He had not changed his mind by the time of Korea, and so told a House subcommittee in March of 1951 that there were very few men "between the ages of 19 and 26 whose skills are so great, and who are so indispensable, that their transfer from

²³Jim Patton to Wint Smith, February 14, 1951, Box 25, Folder "Draft," Smith Papers; George J. Swartz to Glenn Talbott, January 23, 1951, Box 9, Folder 17, Talbott Family Papers; Glenn W. Sample, "Farmers Need More Help," Hoosier Farmer, February, 1951, p. 11; Wisconsin Agriculturalist and Farmer, November 4, 1950, p. 17.

²⁴Flynn, Lewis B. Hershey, pp. 111-113 and 151.

civilian to military life would create much of a ripple." Challenged by Kansas senator Andrew Schoeppel, a strong advocate for agricultural deferments, Hershey defended his position by repeating the argument that "some of the boys [in World War Two] overworked the farm deferment."²⁵

A year later, in a letter to President Truman, Hershey took his skepticism to a more cynical level. He told the President that, "In the hundreds of cases that have come to my personal attention," farmers had always requested deferments only for their sons. "It is never the tenant, nor the hired man," Hershey wrote. The work of a son, he suggested, meant "less outlay in money" for the farmer, and so "the real truth as to the importance of the son in the farming operation can never be determined satisfactorily to all persons concerned."²⁶

Besides questioning the necessity of farm deferments, General Hershey similarly doubted that the draft had as much of a negative impact on farming operations as farmers charged. "[T]he effect of Selective Service on the reduction of farm population," Hershey wrote in his letter to

²⁵Testimony of Lewis B. Hershey, March 7, 1951, U.S. Congress, Senate, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, Industrial Manpower: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Manpower of the Select Committee on Small Business, pp. 47-54.

²⁶U.S. Selective Service System, Annual Report of the Director of Selective Service, 1952 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 28.

President Truman, had been "overemphasize[d]." The 276,000 farm boys ordered for induction were but "a small percentage of [the] 4,776,000 registrants in farm areas." In addition, the approximately 90,000 farmers receiving deferments once again, as in World War Two, far exceeded the number of deferments in other occupational categories. On top of this number, it was pointed out in Selective Service publications, "farmers by the hundreds of thousands" were also deferred for other reasons, including age, dependency, and status as veterans.²⁷

Other Selective Service officials produced similar statistics to argue that farmers were getting a better deal than they claimed. Colonel George Irvin, chief of the field division of Selective Service, observed in a February, 1951, visit to St. Paul that for every twenty-five men inducted, ten received agricultural deferments and only eight received industrial deferments. The Dakotas, Minnesota, and Wisconsin were, he claimed, among the states with the highest deferment rates, and Minnesota in particular had a rate five times the national average. Wisconsin Selective Service director Bentley Courtenay presented figures in April, 1952, demonstrating that, on average, local draft boards in his state had taken only one boy off every

²⁷U.S. Selective Service System, Annual Report, 1952, pp. 27-28; U.S. Selective Service System, Selective Service Under the 1948 Act Extended, p. 56.

forty-four farms. Four months later, in a "thorough and heated" all-day discussion in the Kansas state senate chambers, Selective Service deputy director Louis H. Renfrow offered similar statistics that showed, he said, that the farm belt had not been hit as hard as had been reported.²⁸

Despite Selective Service's insistence on the benign impact of the draft on the nation's farms, both the National Farmers Union and the Agriculture Department consistently argued otherwise. The shortage of farm labor produced by the draft was a persistent topic of Agriculture in National Defense, a weekly newsletter begun by the Agriculture Department in March, 1951. The October 10, 1951, issue reported that "the total farm labor supply for 1951 [was] running short of needs by about two billion man-hours, or about 10 percent of the total manpower needed." It also announced that the agriculture, labor, and defense departments had adopted a policy "permitting the use of military personnel for farm work on a part-time basis in the event of emergencies arising out of shortages of farm labor." The irony of military personnel, some of whom conceivably had been drafted off the farms in the first place, being used to replace farm workers

²⁸U.S. Congress, House, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, Impact of Military Induction Upon Agriculture: Hearings Before the Committee on Agriculture, February 26, 1951, pp. 35-36; Kansas Union Farmer, September, 1952, p. 1; Wisconsin Agriculturalist and Farmer, April 5, 1952, p. 29.

who had been drafted into the military was not missed by Jim Patton, who in November, 1951, wrote to Clarence McCormick that the "matter of maintaining a supply of trained workers on family farms [was] becoming more intense."²⁹

Through late 1951 and into 1952, the problem persisted. McCormick, who told Patton in March, 1952, that he had been feeling "reasonably good about our manpower problems and outlook," nevertheless reported to his friend that the department had recently been receiving "increasing numbers of pessimistic reports on the agricultural labor situation from a good many states." Patton, noting that the problem was made all the more difficult by the refusal of local draft boards to grant needed deferments, told President Truman in May, 1952, that the "scarcity situation of farm manpower . . . [was] becoming more acute with each passing week." By the end of 1952, Agriculture in National Defense still saw the shortage of farm manpower as "one of agriculture's most difficult problems," and predicted that things would only get worse as "in the months ahead . . . men are called into the armed forces under the rotation system."³⁰

²⁹U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agriculture in National Defense, October 10, 1951, Record Group 16 (Office of Information); James G. Patton to Clarence McCormick, November 7, 1951, Box 2005, Folder "Military Service," Record Group 16 (General Correspondence).

³⁰Clarence McCormick to James Patton, March 26, 1952, Box 2068, Folder "Committees January 1 to May 25," Record Group 16 (General

For small farmers, the main problem with the Selective Service System was a lack of uniformity created by the autonomous authority of each local draft board. The national office was unwilling to impose across-the-board mandates but preferred instead to issue vague guidelines instructing the boards to take into consideration "the average annual production per farm worker which is marketed for a local average farm." Each state and each locale took this general yardstick and applied it in different ways. Pennsylvania, for example, decided that a farm producing enough food to feed a family of four plus forty-four servicemen would serve as the base point from which to decide deferments. Local boards in Oklahoma, on the other hand, told their registrants that whether they farmed one acre or a thousand acres had no bearing whatsoever on their draft status. What such a confused system produced were situations, such as the one reported to Congress by Farm Bureau assistant director Matt Triggs, in which two adjoining counties with the same population make-up had sixty-five deferments in one county and none in the other.³¹

Correspondence); James Patton to Harry Truman, Box 17, Folder "National Farmers Union-General," Waters Papers; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agriculture in National Defense, November 3, 1952, Record Group 16 (Office of Information).

³¹U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agriculture in National Defense, April 4, 1951, Record Group 16 (Office of Information); Selective Service I (October, 1951), p. 3; David F. Foster to James G. Patton, December 6, 1950,

The lack of uniformity was addressed in complaints received by both farm organizations and government officials.³² General Hershey, however, denied that the local boards were acting arbitrarily. He consistently praised their efforts, and in a January, 1951, letter to the local boards sarcastically dismissed the charge of a lack of uniformity. "The lack of understanding of specific problems of registrants," he wrote:

has been charged generally by those in I-A rather than by those who had been deferred by the local boards. Umpires are not infrequently charged with bad eyesight or worse when base runners are called out on close plays or even in close games.

He concluded the letter by advising the boards to continue their admirable performance and to not be bothered with the misguided complaints of those who incorrectly accused them of following an arbitrary approach.³³

Hershey's refusal to admit the arbitrary nature of the selective service system's drafting of farmers was matched by his reluctance to issue specific directives to fine-tune the procedure. Asked by Minnesota

Box 1974, Folder "Employment 1-1," Record Group 16 (General Correspondence); Statement of Matt Triggs, February 26, 1951, Impact of Military Induction Upon Agriculture, pp. 15-19.

³²Again, the voluminous letters in the Talbott Family Papers, in the Secretary of Agriculture Records at the National Archives, and in the Wint Smith and Frank Carlson Papers at the Kansas Historical Society contain a number of examples of farmers making this particular appeal.

³³Statement of Lewis B. Hershey, February 26, 1951, Impact of Military Induction Upon Agriculture, p. 27. See also Selective Service II (April, 1952), pp. 1-2.

congressman August Andresen to issue an order guaranteeing one able-bodied man on each farm, Hershey refused to do so, saying once again that such decisions were best left to the local draft boards more aware of the circumstances in their particular locales. He similarly opposed the reinstitution of a point production system as had been used in World War Two. "[E]very time you begin to be specific," Hershey told Congress, "that will get John out, that same specific excludes James, who may be just as reputable, but reputable in a little different way that we did not yet get specific in."³⁴ Hershey did tell Congress that he supported the specific measure of having at least one farmer on each local board. But while farmers had been clamoring for such a reform since the beginning of the Korean War, no directive was ever issued to implement the practice.³⁵

The minor adjustments that were made as a result of farmer protest had no meaningful effect. Agricultural Mobilization Committees created in April, 1951, to advise draft boards were frequently treated with as much disdain as had been directed at individual farmers themselves. The long-sought addition of agriculture to the Labor Department's list of "critical

³⁴Statement of Lewis B. Hershey, February 26, 1951, Impact of Military Induction Upon Agriculture, p. 31.

³⁵Among the many examples of farmer requests for one farmer on each local draft board were Emil Loriks to Clarence McCormick, March 24, 1951, Box 2006, Folder "Military Service January 1-April 6," Record Group 16 (General Correspondence) and Iowa Union Farmer, January, 1951, p. 1.

occupations," which also took place in April, 1951, was likewise a hollow victory. Being on the list did not guarantee deferments for anyone, but, more importantly, as was brought out in the congressional hearings on "the impact of military induction upon agriculture," Selective Service was not bound by Labor's list.³⁶

In deflecting agrarian criticism from Selective Service, General Hershey claimed that the draft had a less damaging effect on agriculture than did the siphoning of labor into war-related industries.³⁷ The relative influence of each factor is difficult to determine, but farmers as a whole agreed that, along with the draft, the higher wages and benefits offered by defense-related industries contributed to the labor shortage on the nation's farms. The addition of 300,000 jobs in the defense industry between the beginning

³⁶Hoosier Farmer, June, 1951, p. 5; Impact of Military Induction Upon Agriculture, p. 86. The congressional hearings revealed the confused state of the entire deferment program, as representatives from the Labor, Commerce, and Agriculture Departments, as well as officials from the Department of Defense and various military branches, presented widely conflicting interpretations of how the system supposedly worked. The lack of a clear understanding angered even Kansas' Clifford Hope, whose previously held belief that Selective Service had been administered in a reasonable and fair manner was replaced by a fear that each branch of government was following its own different rules.

³⁷Interestingly, Hershey blamed not only the "lure of high wages" offered by industry but also the "indiscriminate recruitment of farm youths by the Armed Forces in rural areas without any consideration whatsoever as to whether or not the youths are needed at home on the farm." Selective Service II (April, 1952), p. 1.

of the Korean War and the start of 1951, and the prediction that at least four million similar positions would be created before the end of the year, added to the necessity, as the Department of Labor's Robert Goodwin told the House Committee on Agriculture in March of 1951, of shifting civilian workers, primarily farmers, into defense-related positions. Addressing the growing concerns of farmers that such a shift would hurt the ability of farmers to maintain economic stability, Vermont's George Aiken bluntly told the Senate's Agriculture Committee that same month that, "The whole trouble lies in the fact that other things pay better than farming."³⁸

The war-accelerated exodus from the farm to the factory was the subject of many appeals to government officials. Indiana representative Cecil Harden was told by one of her constituents that a number of the farmers in Vermillion County "don't like the way the Ordnance plant is hiring our farm help away from us," and that it was getting so bad that "a farmer can't keep anybody to help him on the farm." Kansas's Frank Carlson received a similar appeal from a Lawrence farmer who wondered, after observing a

³⁸Statement of Lewis B. Hershey, February 26, 1951, Impact of Military Induction Upon Agriculture, p. 29; Testimony of Robert Goodwin, March 8, 1951, U.S. Congress, House, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, Farm Labor: Hearings Before the House Committee on Agriculture, pp. 36-7; Statement of George Aiken, March 14, 1951, U.S. Congress, Senate, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, Farm Labor Program: Hearings Before the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, p. 71.

number of his neighbors abandon their farms to go to defense plants, "what would happen if we all quit and start working for the government." The Grange's Herschel Newsom likewise remarked in February, 1951, that on a recent trip to Indiana he had been "asked to fill out six applications for recommendations to industries [for] people that have worked and operated farms in my neighborhood." This strong pull of defense industries, combined with the drain of Selective Service, prompted Jim Patton's rueful, but inaccurate, observation that the United States in fifteen years would not have "enough people left in agriculture to produce this nation's food."³⁹

Truman administration officials were more optimistic. The Director of Defense Mobilization's eighth quarterly report to the president announced that after two and a half years of war "the manpower needs of the Nation have with few exceptions been met." Part of the reason for the success, the report claimed, was the shifting of workers "from less essential activities to those more important to the national security."⁴⁰ Administration figures

³⁹Letter to Cecil Harden from "Dana in Vermillion County," included in 1951 transcript of radio broadcast, Box 8, Folder 14, Harden Papers; C.E. Richards to Frank Carlson, May 8, 1951, Box 1 (81st Congress General Correspondence 1950-1951 A-C), Carlson Papers; "How We Can Stop Rising Prices" in Harding, editor, The Age of Danger, p. 290; Jim Patton to Clarence McCormick, April 6, 1952, Box 2073, Folder "Employment 1-1," Record Group 16 (General Correspondence).

⁴⁰"The Job Ahead for Defense Mobilization (January 1, 1953): Eighth Quarterly Report to the President by the Director of Defense Mobilization,"

generally avoided the politically foolish error of publicly labelling farmers as "less essential," but it was obvious that they felt farmers were overstating their labor difficulties. Assistant Secretary of State Anna Rosenberg described the farm problem as "more one of machinery and replacement parts . . . than of mass manpower."⁴¹ The Department of Labor's A.W. Motley, in a heated discussion with August Andresen, disputed that the farm labor problem was as bleak as the Minnesota congressman suggested. Housing was scarce in industrial areas, Motley argued, and the improvement in both wages and working conditions on farms made rural employment much more attractive. Andresen rejected Motley's analysis, telling him that the two and a half million farmers with holdings of less than one hundred acres were "not in a position to build houses to bring out families to work on their farms and to pay wages in competition with what they can get in industry. . . . They are paying," Andresen continued, "around \$125 a month for good farm labor, but there are not many that are taking the jobs. And as war production increases there will be less and less who will be willing to go on the farm."⁴²

pp. 33 and 36, Box 40, Folder 3, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation Records, Iowa State University.

⁴¹Testimony of Anna M. Rosenberg, March 22, 1951, Industrial Manpower, p. 102.

⁴²Impact of Military Induction Upon Agriculture, pp. 114-115.

One reason for the divergent perceptions of reality between farmers and non-farmers was the tendency of the latter group, as the Farm Bureau's Matt Triggs put it, "to take agricultural production for granted - to assume that farm people will be able to continue to produce abundantly irrespective of the facilities and manpower available to them." This erroneous assumption led policymakers to overlook what Triggs called the "essential question - where can each individual make the maximum contribution to the national defense effort?"⁴³ This oversight produced both the indiscriminate drafting of essential farm labor as well as the siphoning of that labor into supposedly more "essential" defense-related industries. It also led to legislation that, despite its well-intentioned efforts to alleviate the farm labor problem, actually angered small farmers and increased their suspicions that the crisis in Korea was being used, as the Farmers Union's Robert Engler told the Senate in March, 1951, as an excuse to further "damage . . . their already insecure economic position."⁴⁴

Enacted in early 1951, the Mexican Labor Importation Law provided for the temporary entry of Mexican laborers into the United States. The Farm

⁴³American Farm Bureau Federation Official Newsletter, March 5, 1951, p. 1.

⁴⁴Statement of Robert Engler, National Farmers Union, Before the Senate Agriculture Committee, On Farm Labor, March 14, 1951," Box 36, Folder "National Farmers Union 1950-1956," Hickenlooper Papers.

Bureau praised the law for helping to maintain and increase agricultural production, for providing a "feasible alternative source of labor" supposedly unavailable in much of the country, and for adding to both the dollar earnings and the agricultural knowledge of the Mexican nationals fortunate enough to be a part of the program. But with the exception of the Associated Farmers of California, a group that ironically also supported the importation of South Korean farm workers so that they could "see how democracy works," the Farm Bureau stood alone in calling for Mexican laborers as replacements for American farm workers moved off the land as a result of the Korean War.⁴⁵

For the majority of American farmers, the passage of the Mexican Labor importation Law showed how little the administration understood the requirements of farming in a mechanized world. The government seemed to be saying that one agricultural worker was as good as any other, so that when one person was moved off the land he could easily and quickly be replaced by any other warm-blooded body.

Farmers reacted to this mindset by emphasizing the necessity of skilled

⁴⁵"Resolutions of the AFBF for 1952, Adopted at the 33rd Annual Meeting, December 13, 1951, Chicago, Illinois," Box 1, Folder "AFBF 1952-1953," Hickenlooper Papers; The Associated Farmer, March-April, 1952, pp. 1-4.

labor and by questioning the ability of unskilled immigrants to adequately perform the tasks essential to the running of a mechanized farm. "In this highly mechanized age," one woman wrote to Kansas senator Frank Carlson, "it is not every Tom, Dick and Harry that can operate" a farm. Carlson's office was flooded with letters arguing that unskilled Mexican laborers were incapable of running the essential equipment and that the necessity of hiring an additional foreman to train them was financially prohibitive. Carlson's Kansas colleague, Senator Andrew Schoeppel, also received a number of letters opposed to the plan, as did Farmers Union officials Glenn Talbott and Jim Patton. Schoeppel told the Senate in March, 1951, that a Kansas farmer with "\$25,000 or \$30,000 invested in machinery" would not be pleased at the prospect of trusting that equipment to unskilled laborers. Talbott made the same point a year later when he told the Senate that the necessity of running a "\$6,000 combine [or] a \$5,000 Diesel tractor," made it impractical to "replace trained year-around skilled farm help with just common labor." In a February, 1952, appeal to President Truman, Patton wrote that, "Obviously, the importation of untrained aliens from Mexico, or elsewhere, won't do the job." Even Ladd Haystead, the agrarian commentator contemptuous of farmer claims of second class citizenship, agreed that the "labor import will not help greatly because of that labor's lack of knowledge

of how to operate and maintain complex machinery."⁴⁶

Iowa congressman H.R. Gross went beyond the charge that the importation of Mexican agricultural labor demonstrated the administration's lack of understanding of the agrarian way of life. In comments before the House Committee on Agriculture, the former editor of the Iowa Union Farmer directly tied the program to America's participation in Korea. Speaking of "good American farmers, some of them aged and ailing, some overworked, and some forced to sell out or seriously curtail production because the military has stranded them, grabbing their sons and hired hands," Gross painted an image of farmers being "on the block, to be traded off to the military for foreigners. I had hoped," he argued, "that human auctions of this sort ended with the Civil War." Gross also wondered aloud why there was such a surplus of foreign laborers. If the fighting in Korea, he asked, was "supposed to be a united fight against communism, why are not these importable foreigners serving in their own armed forces in the front lines?" Adding to Gross' anger was his belief that the alien importation program specifically, and perhaps even deliberately, discriminated against farmers.

⁴⁶Mrs. A.A. Zoeller to Frank Carlson, February 3, 1951, Box 2 (81st Congress General Correspondence 1950-1951), Carlson Papers; Industrial Manpower, p. 55; Testimony of Glenn Talbott, April 16, 1952, Farm Price Supports and Production Goals, p. 106; James G. Patton to Harry Truman, February 12, 1952, Box 10, Folder #11, Patton Papers; Haystead, "4th Semi-Annual Agricultural Report," p.11.

"I have heard," he said:

of no proposals to import foreign industrial workers, businessmen, lawyers, teachers, ministers, doctors, dentists, bankers, and so forth, so that Americans in those fields can be drafted out of their jobs. Why then single out farmers for this brand of travesty?⁴⁷

Gross' comments were an extension of the Farmers Union's continued claims of the "unholy alliance" between government and the more powerful elements of American society. In fact, the Farm Bureau's outspoken support for the importation of alien agricultural labor convinced the Farmers Union that the program was, as Robert Engler said, "a threat to the well being of all family farmers." It provided, Engler argued, "a plentiful and docile supply of itinerant labor which can be turned on and off, as the need develops, by regional government officials sympathetic and attentive to the demands of large growers, canners, packers and processors."⁴⁸ Unable to compete with the cheaper foreign labor, America's small farmers would continue to be forced off the land.

The release in February, 1951, of a Congressional study entitled

⁴⁷Statement of H.R. Gross, March 12, 1951, Farm Labor, pp. 139-143. One other agrarian group, the National Farm Labor Union, also made a direct connection between the immigration law and world affairs. The California-based A.F.L. affiliate opposed the program because it offered "Latin American Communists" the opportunity to infiltrate "the United States disguised as agricultural workers from Mexico." Farm Labor News, January, 1951, p. 2, February, 1951, p. 1.

⁴⁸"Statement of Robert Engler," March 14, 1951, p. 1, Hickenlooper Papers.

"Underemployment of Rural Families" further suggested that the government was continuing what Facts for Farmers called a policy of "forcible displacement" of small farmers. Known informally as the Sparkman Report, after the Alabama Democrat who chaired the committee investigating the status of America's farming community, the study argued that two million of America's farmers produced so little that both they and the nation would be better served if they could be encouraged to move off the land and into more productive jobs in industry. This was particularly true, Successful Farming argued in approving the report, because of the "vast expansion in our military strength" brought on by the Korean War and by the necessity of meeting "the threat of world Communism."⁴⁹

While Successful Farming and others supportive of Farm Bureau-style commercial farming hailed the findings of the Sparkman Report, the National Farmers Union and other representatives of family farms denounced the study as a continuation of the assault on their existence begun by the Chamber of Commerce in 1945 and followed up on by Henry Luce's Life magazine in 1947. The proposals offered in the report seemed to be

⁴⁹U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on the Economic Report, 82nd Congress, 1st Session, February 2, 1951, Underemployment of Rural Families: Materials Prepared for the Joint Committee on the Economic Report; Facts for Farmers, March, 1951, p. 4; Lauren Soth, "America's No. 1 Farm Problem," Successful Farming XLIX (March, 1951), p. 46.

designed, Facts for Farmers charged in March, 1951, "to increase the size of the big farms by eliminating the smaller farms." Iowa's Fred Stover, who judged the main theme of the report to be that "lower income farms are chiefly responsible for underemployment," claimed that it was all part of the overall effort to do away with government-sponsored price supports and, eventually, America's small farmers themselves. Acknowledging that in the furor brought on by Korea "the draft boards have already adopted a tough policy in dealing with small and family-size farms," Facts for Farmers concluded that "the committee's recommendations cannot be expected to discourage this procedure."⁵⁰

Six months after the release of the Sparkman Report, a 60-member panel of "top manpower men in Government, industry and university circles" met at Stanford University's Institute on Manpower Utilization and Government Personnel. The group's findings, released after three days of meetings, repeated the Congressional charge that small farmers were "one of the worst-utilized sources of labor" in the country. Robert Clark, the director of the Truman administration's National Security Resources Board and one of the conference participants, ignored the usual administration reluctance to

⁵⁰Facts for Farmers, March, 1951, p. 4; Iowa Union Farmer, April, 1951, p. 1.

label farming as relatively less important than other occupations when he suggested that "it might not be a bad idea to close up the Nation's sub-marginal farms and free their manpower for more essential use." The recommendations of the conference, which the San Francisco Chronicle predicted would have "great weight in influencing future Government manpower policies," confirmed for Fred Stover what the Farmers Union had been "warning about for a year - and more - that the family farmers were going to be thrown into the maw of the war machine." Stover argued that what the conference was telling American farmers was that, "You fellows don't turn out enough of the sinews of war, so we're going to put you in places where we can see to it that you do."⁵¹

Opposition to the war-facilitated consignment of the family farmer to what one Wisconsin writer called "the scrap heap designed for us by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce,"⁵² was matched by small farmer opposition both to the increased corporate profits generated by American participation in Korea and to the reluctance of the Truman administration to take action to limit these corporate gains. When business profits hit an all-time high of \$40 billion for the third quarter of 1950, climbed an additional \$8 billion

⁵¹San Francisco Chronicle, August 25, 1951, p. 3; Iowa Union Farmer, September 14, 1951, p. 1.

⁵²Harvey Witt to Farmers Union State Office, February 14, 1951, Box 1, Folder 4, Hones Papers.

for the final quarter of the year, and then continued in an ever-upward spiral, farmers reacted bitterly. Facts for Farmers accused American businessmen of "boosting their prices with the first headlines of war," while Fred Stover's Iowa Union Farmer decried corporations for deliberately "fanning the flames of war" and charged the Truman administration with pursuing a policy of "globalarceny." Spurred by the U.S. News and World Report's observation that American business activity was "being supported by a rising tide of defense orders," Stover labelled the corporate-propelled "war hysteria" as the "nation's number one racket." The Iowa farm leader's views were echoed in other farm journals, particularly the Northeastern and Eastern editions of the National Union Farmer, and in letters to farm state congressional figures. One Kansas woman, particularly incensed that the war in Korea primarily would benefit American corporations, laid the blame on "a corrupt group of politicians . . . who don't give a damn about anything but the almighty dollar." A group of Montana farmers, returning from a peace rally in Chicago in the summer of 1951, described their weariness at "sending our boys to act as robots for the good of a few."⁵³

⁵³Iowa Union Farmer, November, 1950, p. 5, May, 1951, p. 8, and November, 1951, p. 8; Facts for Farmers, October, 1950, p. 3; Northeastern Union Farmer, August, 1950, p. 2, October, 1950, p. 2, and November, 1951, p. 4; Eastern Union Farmer, October, 1950, p. 2, February, 1952, p. 1, and September, 1952, p. 2; Virginia Lee Kenyon to Wint Smith, July 18, 1950,

A House Ways and Means report offering the opinion that industrial production "cannot be achieved through patriotism alone, and that business must be left with a reasonable profit incentive," increased farmer concerns that the government was assisting businesses in their quest for profits. How much more "reasonable," Fred Stover asked, could the billions in industrial profits be?⁵⁴ Able to pass any government-imposed taxes on to their customers and capable of hiding war-time profits through depletion allowances and accelerated amortization, American businesses seemed immune to any pressure to pay their fair share of the increased costs of a wartime economy.

In truth, there was very little such pressure applied to American corporations. Although at the beginning of the Korean War President Truman had proposed paying for the conflict through a combination of higher individual income taxes and an excess profits tax, the second of these was initially delayed and then finally killed by proponents of big business. The National Association of Manufacturers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Committee for Economic Development united in their successful claims that an excess profits tax unfairly discriminated against corporations by

Box 20 (81st Congress Correspondence), Folder "Korea Situation," Smith Papers; Montana Farmers Union News, August 22, 1951, p. 4.

⁵⁴Iowa Union Farmer, February, 1951, p. 8.

removing what the C.E.D. called the "incentive to economical operation of business."⁵⁵

What was most galling to the National Farmers Union and to other advocates of small farmer equity was that while corporations seemed to be exempt from sharing the burden of increased wartime spending, the farmers themselves were being asked not only "to do the fighting and dying," but also "to finance [Wall Street's] profitable wars." Citing "conditions arising as a result of the Korean war," the Budget Bureau, with the approval of President Truman, at the end of 1950 cut \$580 million in non-defense related spending. Many of the cuts were made, Facts for Farmers complained, "at the expense of farm programs." These included reductions in funds for conservation, rural telephones and electrification, and farm tenancy and housing. The Agriculture Department simultaneously announced its own changes in the farm housing loan program. The new guidelines, requiring that the amount of the loan plus a farmer's other indebtedness could not exceed 95% of the appraisal value of the farm, made loans more difficult to obtain, but were necessary, the department argued, "to curtail the use of building material for non-defense purposes." To Fred Stover, however, such adjustments indicated that despite its announced intention of throwing its

⁵⁵North Dakota Union Farmer, December 4, 1950, p. 8.

weight "behind the family farm," the Agriculture Department could more accurately be portrayed as throwing its weight "AT the family farm."⁵⁶

Administration budget plans for fiscal year 1952, following President Truman's desire for a "rigid economy" in the nation's non-defense activities, included further cuts for agriculture. The R.E.A.'s new loan authorization program was reduced from the \$297 million available in 1951 to only \$109 million for 1952. Overall, the agriculture budget was sliced in half, dropping from \$3 billion to \$1.5 billion. The reduction was particularly devastating to the price support program, as the \$238 million authorization represented but one-seventh of the 1950 allotment. Of equal concern to the Farmers Union was the administration's acquiescence in the National Tax Equality Association's attempts to destroy agricultural co-ops through taxation. Secretary of the Treasury John Snyder was described by the Iowa Union Farmer as a key figure in the N.T.E.A.'s "relentless and vicious campaign" to convince Americans that co-ops were "war-time tax dodgers." Truman's failure to discipline Snyder for participating in the N.T.E.A.'s "attempt to capitalize on the war crisis to smear co-ops" convinced the Farmers Union "that while Truman and his apologists in the farm movement

⁵⁶Iowa Union Farmer, November, 1951, p. 8, and February, 1951, p. 8; Facts for Farmers, November, 1950, p. 3; Rocky Mountain Union Farmer, October, 1950, p. 3.

claim he's a friend of the farmer, in actions he is not."⁵⁷

By the end of 1951, the Farmers Union accurately concluded that small farmers had taken "a terrific beating" at the hands of both the 82nd Congress and the Truman administration. The organization attributed the beating to the "fantastically high war spending" that had produced both increasingly burdensome income taxes as well as a number of excise taxes on such items as gasoline, diesel fuel, and truck parts and accessories that directly impacted on family farmers. Fully aware that the increased taxes also struck at non-farmers, the Farmers Union nevertheless pointed out that the decreased take-home pay of urban residents would "cut the buying power of city workers and their families" and so produce an "indirect cost to the farmers in the form of a contracting market and, with this, a further decline in the price of their products. . . ." When Leon Keyserling, chairman of President Truman's Council of Economic Advisors, offered his opinion that "economies have not been wrecked because the people decided to . . . get healthier by eating less," the Farmers Union interpreted his perhaps well-intentioned effort toward universal belt-tightening as another example of the administration's inability to appreciate, understand, or even be concerned about, "the fact that such a happening would hurt the farmers'

⁵⁷Facts for Farmers, February, 1951, p. 1; Iowa Union Farmer, February, 1951, p. 8, September 14, 1951, p. 8, and December, 1950, p. 5.

market."⁵⁸

Arguing against heightened military spending, the Iowa Farmers Union at the end of 1951 offered an alternative budget for the United States focusing on "tractors instead of tanks" and promising to give Americans "something in return for [their] tax dollars." The proposal's suggestion to raise teacher salaries by 50 percent and its Francis Townsend-like social security program to provide citizens over 65 with a monthly stipend of \$150 were both out of the mainstream of American political reality. But the bulk of the \$64.7 billion budget proposal involved more realistic and attainable measures. Increased funding for public works, an accelerated program of river valley development designed "to put the TVA pattern into effect nationally," and a \$3.7 billion program for public health insurance all clearly reflected the Farmers Union's lingering allegiance to the New Deal.⁵⁹

Not surprisingly, the Farmers Union "budget for peace" also included a program of agricultural subsidies. It was modeled, in fact, on Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan's 1949 proposal to have the government pay family-type farmers the difference between market price and a fair return. The Brannan Plan, however, had been an early casualty of American

⁵⁸Iowa Union Farmer, November, 1951, p. 8, and February, 1951, p. 8.

⁵⁹Iowa Union Farmer, November, 1951, p. 8.

involvement in Korea, as the administration and other elements of the Democratic Party had backed off from the program as unnecessarily expensive in light of increased military spending. Four months after U.S. troops first landed in Korea, Vice President Alben Barkley told a Milwaukee audience that neither he personally nor the administration in general were committed to the Brannan Plan. While he changed his story the next day in Sioux City, denying that he had ever suggested that the administration was not behind Brannan's program, the vice president nevertheless repeated his personal disapproval of the plan and this time added that "the Democratic Party wasn't committed to it." Barkley's convoluted distinction between his personal views, the views of the administration, and the views of the Democratic Party created a situation that, Facts for Farmers reported, was "not exactly reassuring."⁶⁰

The same could be said of the overall economic position of America's small farmers in the years of the Korean War. Contrary to the long-standing image of the conflict as having a negligible impact on the national economy, American involvement in Korea actually accelerated the decline of the nation's small farmers. The drain on agricultural labor produced by a combination of draft calls and the lure of higher paying jobs in defense-

⁶⁰Iowa Union Farmer, July 15, 1950, pp. 4-5; Facts for Farmers, November, 1950, p. 3.

related industries forced a number of family farms either to reduce their output to the point of economic disaster or to close down altogether. Particularly discouraging to these often displaced agrarians was the simultaneous growth in war-generated corporate profits.

The federal government's seeming failure to understand their plight made the farmers' position even more unstable. Responding to the war-related crisis in agricultural labor with an ill-advised call for increased foreign workers, with an often unstated but frequently understood suggestion that farmers were less essential to the American economy than other workers, and with a general reduction in government sponsored programs for agriculture, the Truman administration and the congress together created an impression that America's small farmers were dispensable. As the leading spokesman for the nation's family farmers, the National Farmers Union responded to the government attitude by questioning the uncertain, but increasingly negative, future that American involvement in Korea seemed to portend for America's small farms.

Chapter Six

Carrying Forward the Tradition of Dissent

Farmers Union officials opposed the Korean War not only because of its devastating impact on the domestic livelihood of America's small farmers, including the manpower drain caused by both the draft and the lure of war-related industries, but also because the "police action" continued what the organization perceived as the misguided direction of President Truman's overall approach to foreign policy. Following through on organizational themes expressed since 1946, Farmers Union figures charged that American actions in Korea denied oppressed peoples the opportunities of true democracy, continued the selfish expansion of America's corporate interests, and further entrenched the nation's unilateral approach to world affairs. From the opening of hostilities in the summer of 1950, through the ebb and flow of combat and the stalemated peace talks of 1951, Farmers Union groups across the nation vehemently opposed the war. Although occasionally differing in their specific reasons for criticizing the conflict, those groups expressing opposition collectively agreed that American involvement in Korea was neither good for the nation nor for the future of

world peace.

Among state and regional affiliates, the most vocal opponent of American involvement in Korea was Fred Stover's Iowa Farmers Union. In its first publication following the beginning of hostilities, the Iowa Union Farmer questioned U.S. support of Syngman Rhee and charged that the chief beneficiaries of America's actions would be Wall Street interests eager to profit from what a 1947 Farmers Union resolution had characterized as "a corporate imperialism . . . more virulent and viscious than any colonial imperialism of the past." The July, 1950, issue reprinted the 1947 resolution and contained as well a number of supporting statements: a 1948 Stover speech anticipating the end of America's "own pet 20th Century brand of corporate imperialism;" New York's American Labor Congressman Vito Marcantonio's argument denying the inevitability of war; W.E.B. DuBois' July, 1950, letter to Secretary of State Dean Acheson protesting the Secretary's public attack on the anti-nuclear World Peace Appeal; and a cartoon lampooning Cold War profiteers eager to soak the American people for the profits of war. The newspaper reminded its readers of the Farmers Union's repeated predictions that America's corporate-dominated foreign policy would eventually lead to war and suggested that after years of such

warnings the Korean incident offered Americans truly interested in peace the opportunity to take a stand. "This is the Test," Stover charged, "Now is the Time." Encouraged by an "avalanche" of positive responses, Stover ordered the printing of an extra two thousand copies of the July 15 issue and vowed to pursue the protest against American involvement in Korea.¹



One of the great challenges for Americans, Stover believed, was to somehow get to the truth concerning the war. He accepted the view, later developed in I.F. Stone's The Hidden History of the Korean War, that the United States had jumped the gun by ordering troops into Korea prior to official United Nations action. Having done so, Stover charged, the Truman

¹Iowa Union Farmer, July 15, 1950, pp. 1-8, and August 12, 1950, p. 1.

administration, with support of the press, presented to the American public a "maze of distortions and jingoistic war propaganda" to reinforce the impression that the United States was merely one participant in a U.N.-centered effort toward peace. "The special emphasis" given by President Truman and by Secretary of State Dean Acheson "to supporting the United Nations," Stover wrote on June 30, "is phony."²

To counter the government's alleged program of deliberate misinformation, Stover distributed to Farmers Union members materials on the war obtained from W.E.B. DuBois' Peace Information Center and from the Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy. Intelligent discussion of the war, Stover argued, required an informed public, and if the only information Americans had on Korea came from the government, such intelligent, informed debates would be impossible. Doing his part to promote an "intensified campaign for peace," Stover accepted invitations to speak at a number of in-state and out-of-state Farmers Union meetings in July. The positive responses he received following these addresses, particularly those in Minnesota, reinforced his conviction in the righteousness of the Farmers Union's "anti-monopoly, anti-militaristic

²Fred W. Stover "To the Directors," July 14, 1950, Fred W. Stover "To All Officers," July 19, 1950, and F.W. Stover to Elmer Bendiner, June 30, 1950, all in the Stover Papers.

policy," and convinced him even further that the Korean War would prove to be "a bad blotch on the history of our country."³

Stover's Iowa Farmers Union affirmed its opposition to the war at its 34th annual convention held in Des Moines on September 21-23, 1950. Coming two weeks after Styles Bridges' charges of Communist infiltration of the Farmers Union, and only six days after the successful Inchon landing had reversed the previously desperate situation of allied forces in Korea, the convention faced the challenges of repudiating Bridges' claims and of denouncing a military effort that because of General MacArthur's success was now more widely supported by the American public. Organizational leaders and convention guest speakers dauntlessly addressed both tasks. In their addresses before the convention and in a series of strongly-worded resolutions, they reiterated the Farmers Union's long-held belief in peaceful cooperation in the international arena and its insistence that American foreign policy was tied too closely to corporate profit.

Addressing a banquet crowd on the second night of the convention, Reverend Irwin Gaede of the Madison, Wisconsin, Pilgrim Congregational Church warned against a growing trend toward fascism in America. Echoing

³Fred W. Stover "To All Officers," July 19, 1950, F.W. Stover to Peace Information Center, August 7, 1950, and F.W. Stover "To the Directors," August 11, 1950, all in the Stover Papers.

a long-cherished Farmers Union credo, Reverend Gaede argued that the trend was created in part because the nation "no longer [had] Franklin Delano Roosevelt upon whom to depend."⁴ Earlier that same day, convention delegates had approved six resolutions, half of which directly addressed American foreign policy and the Korean War. Outlining in great detail the declining status of America's family farmers, one resolution placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of U.S. policies abroad:

Since the recent military actions ordered by the President, the Wall Street squeeze play on the farmers and the rest of the common people has shifted into high gear. Implement manufacturers boost prices to the limit as plans for a total war of unlimited duration are taken from their locked compartments. These plans provide for allocation of vital materials for war purposes and a scarcity program of farm equipment as the tanks-not-tractors era is ushered in.⁵

Other resolutions reaffirmed the 1947 National Farmers Union position against American corporate imperialism, condemned the use of atomic weapons by all nations, and repudiated Senator Bridges' charges against the organization.

The focus of the convention involved a resolution in which delegates urged "a settlement of the present war in Korea." It could be accomplished, they argued, by following a three-step approach: seating of the People's

⁴Iowa Union Farmer, October 21, 1950, p. 7.

⁵"Convention Resolutions of the 34th Annual Convention of the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America," p. 3, Stover Papers.

Republic of China in the U.N., having the U.N. Security Council call for an immediate truce, and bringing representatives of North Korea before the U.N. to "work out a basis for establishment of a truly representative government in Korea." The emphasis upon United Nations action, like Reverend Gaede's appeal to the memory of Franklin Roosevelt, served as a reminder of the Farmers Union's consistency in demanding international over unilateral solutions. Passed by a better than two-to-one vote, the resolution also "call[ed] upon our government to abandon the position that military force is the road to peace" and requested an immediate Security Council conference "for the purpose of working out an overall agreement ending the cold war in Europe and hot wars in other parts of the world."⁶

Before the convention closed on the 23rd, Fred Stover addressed the delegates on the topic of Atomic Blessing or Atomic Blasting. The speech, later published as a 23-page pamphlet, summarized the Cold War history of American foreign policy and added a racial dimension to a critique that until then had focused almost exclusively on economic concerns. Stover asked the convention delegates to place themselves "in the position of the people of Korea and look at things from their point of view." To do so, he said, meant

⁶"Convention Resolutions of the 34th Annual Convention of the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America," pp. 4-6, Stover Papers.

recognizing America's historic financial and commercial aggression against the "red brothers" found in the United States "by its discoverers" and against the "black brothers . . . brought there to be mere 'hewers of wood and drawers of water.'" Such inequitable treatment would likewise be imposed on Asians if the "leather-lunged war patrioteers who contend that differing ideologies cannot exist in the same world" were allowed to pursue their policies. The way to avoid such an occurrence, Stover argued, was "not by fanning the flames of this war . . . this police action . . . into a world atomic holocaust, but by continuing to seek peaceful alternatives regardless of the odds that are against us. This is an obligation," he concluded, "that we cannot evade with honor."⁷

As the Chinese counteroffensive of late November once again reversed the tide of battle in Korea, Stover and the Iowa Farmers Union continued their appeals for a peaceful resolution as well as their angered criticisms of American and South Korean policies and actions. The December, 1950, issue of the Iowa Union Farmer alerted readers to reports of mass executions carried out by Syngman Rhee's troops in which men, women, and

⁷Fred Stover, Atomic Blessing or Atomic Blasting (Hampton, Iowa: U.S. Farmers Association, 1950), pp. 13-16. Additional information on the 1950 Iowa Farmers Union convention can be found in George Rinehart's 1955 Iowa State Masters Thesis, "The Iowa Farmers Union: An Historical Survey," pp. 93-97.

children were roped off in pairs, led into trenches, and shot in the back of the head. "U.S. military authorities," the Iowa newspaper declared, "were 'reluctant' to interfere . . . since the executions [were] being carried out under sentences imposed by Korean courts and Korean citizens." Noting that U.S. authorities already controlled "the movements of Korean troops," Stover's newspaper rejected the claim of inadequate authority and argued that U.S. officials should take similar control in stopping the executions.⁸

In back-to-back "Special Report[s] to Iowa Union Farmer Readers," Stover in December, 1950, and January, 1951, decried "The Debacle in Korea" and called for "the sanity of mediation [to] replace the madness of atomic war." The Chinese counteroffensive had produced, he wrote, a number of alternate proposals that seemingly aimed at peace but which were simply redrawn plans for war. Stover was particularly critical of the suggestions offered by Herbert Hoover, Joseph Kennedy, and Robert Taft. Hoover and Kennedy, he wrote, proposed the withdrawal of U.S. troops, but also suggested that the nation "go into the heavy hardware business on a large scale by building a great navy and air force." Taft likewise called for a re-focusing of U.S. military might, with a particular emphasis on "tailing up Chiang Kai-shek on Formosa with American guns and dollars." For Stover, the suggestions of

⁸Iowa Union Farmer, December, 1950, p. 5.

withdrawal from Korea would solve very little if they did not simultaneously contain a reduction in American military forces both at home and abroad. To do one without the other would solve the "debacle in Korea," but would also perpetuate the growth of the nation's military-industrial complex and the accompanying decline in the economic stability of America's small farmers.⁹

For Fred Stover, the most promising event in the first ten months of the war was Harry Truman's April, 1951, firing of General Douglas MacArthur. The Iowa farm leader hailed the President's action, which he argued had been delayed by Truman's fear of the political repercussions of dismissing the popular "emperor" of Japan, as an overdue but genuine victory for the advocates of peace. Stover, in fact, credited the pressures exerted on Truman by domestic and international peace advocates as the "key reason" for MacArthur's dismissal.¹⁰

Despite his pleasure at seeing MacArthur removed, Stover lamented that Truman's action in dismissing the popular military figure did very little in terms of actually altering American policy. While the deed seemingly moved the United States, and the world, farther away from the dangerous precipice of world war that MacArthur's more belligerent recommendations had

⁹Iowa Union Farmer, December, 1950, p. 4, and January, 1951, p. 4.

¹⁰Iowa Union Farmer, April, 1951, p. 4.

threatened to bring to reality, the U.S. nevertheless remained locked in an Asian land war that exhausted national resources which Stover believed would be more wisely spent on a domestic economic agenda. In one respect, Stover argued, MacArthur's removal made the situation even worse. By eliminating the immediate concern over a major war in Asia, a war that would have detracted from American business interests in Europe, the President's action reinforced the Europe-first preference of American capitalists who viewed investments in Europe as the key to priming the American economic pump. The reinforcement of that view offered little hope that economic priorities would be adjusted to the benefit of America's family farmers. Having hoped that Truman's dismissal of MacArthur would lead to the logical next step of total withdrawal from Korea, Stover rather quickly realized just the opposite. Immediate withdrawal was not a consideration, for the United States was not about to "lose face" in Korea by abandoning ship. Whatever hope Stover had harbored at the initial announcement of the general's dismissal that a shift in policy was imminent faded into an angry acceptance that the whole Truman-MacArthur debate was little more than a "big public circus."¹¹

Equally discouraging to Stover were events surrounding the initiation of

¹¹ Iowa Union Farmer, April, 1951, p. 4, and May, 1951, p. 3.

peace talks in the summer of 1951. Having supported the unsuccessful attempts of Iowa Congressman H.R. Gross and Colorado Senator Edwin Johnson to implement an armistice on the one-year anniversary of the war on June 25, Stover and his fellow Iowa Farmers Union members at first welcomed the opening of the July truce talks in Kaesong as a "real victory" for the forces that for thirteen months had pushed for peace. "While at this writing the results of [the] cease-fire talks are not final," the Iowa Union Farmer announced on July 23, "it is significant that they at least are being held." But when the talks broke down one month later, Iowa Farmers Union officials were not terribly surprised. The United States, they argued, had been dragged kicking and screaming into the talks, forced by public opinion, and by the realization that victory would not come as easily as they had initially supposed, to unwillingly participate in the negotiations.¹²

The reluctance to seek a cease-fire was attributed primarily to Wall Street. Monitoring of stock market trends convinced Stover and other Iowa Farmers Union members that increased news of war produced rising markets, while reports of possible peace produced corresponding declines. Homer Ayres, who wrote a regular Iowa Union Farmer column entitled "The Farmer's Angle," summarized the trend by observing that:

The men who reap the big profits from making gadgets and heavy

¹²Iowa Union Farmer, July 23, 1951, p. 1, and August 20, 1951, p. 3.

hardware for killing do not take kindly to suggestions that they retool their plants and look for markets not connected with war. . . . With so much of the heavy and light industry making instruments for legal murder, any talk that the nations might sit down around a table hits the stock market a sickening lick in the solar plexus.¹³

Acting on this premise, and convinced that "the breaking off of truce talks in Korea can become a disaster for our nation and the world," Fred Stover joined with nine other affiliates of the American Peace Crusade in telegramming President Truman on the eve of the sixth anniversary of the dropping of the A-bomb on Hiroshima. Calling for "a spirit of reasonableness and compromise," the telegram asked the President "to instruct [MacArthur's replacement] General Ridgway to resume truce talks immediately in a conciliatory spirit of give and take and fair exchange."¹⁴

Negotiations were still in limbo when the Iowa Farmers Union opened its 35th annual convention in Des Moines on Friday, September 21, 1951. The two day conference focused once again on "war mobilization and its accompanying inflation" as "the chief factor in the family farmers' many

¹³Iowa Union Farmer, August 20, 1951, p. 3

¹⁴"Text of Telegram Sent by the American Peace Crusade," August 5, 1951, Stover Papers. The other nine signers were: Robert Morse Lovett, former governor of the Virgin Islands; nuclear physicist Philip Morrison; artist and Progressive Party official Paul Robeson; Clementina J. Paolone, chairman of the American Women for Peace; Episcopal theologian Joseph Fletcher; labor leader Ernest DeMaio; writer Dorothy Brewster; Thomas Richardson, former chairman of the National Anti-Discrimination Committee of the United Public Workers; and Methodist minister Willard Uphaus.

serious problems." Conference participants demanded that "in place of a costly program which can only spread the flames of war and lead to a military dictatorship at home" the Truman administration adopt instead "a positive program of peace, a program to strengthen democracy and protect our civil rights, a program to achieve full parity for the farmers and maintain our families on the land"¹⁵

Although the conference resolutions, unlike those in 1950, made only one direct reference to Korea, the war and American foreign policy in general nevertheless dominated the spirit of the proceedings. The essential tie between domestic and foreign policy wound like a unifying thread through resolutions calling for full parity, for a stop to the National Tax Equality Association's campaign "to smash co-ops through unjust taxation," for the creation of a Missouri Valley Administration, and for the appropriation of federal funds for programs of soil conservation and "proper land use." Decrying the nation's "reactionary foreign policy" rooted in the 1898 "acquisition of the Hawaiian Islands, Cuba and the Philippines," the Iowa Farmers Union called for "trade with all people of the world regardless of religion or politics." Opening of restricted markets, the organization argued, would "furnish untold numbers of jobs to the city people in the

¹⁵Iowa Union Farmer, October, 1951, p. 4.

factories and also a market for farm commodities."¹⁶

While Fred Stover addressed the convention at both the opening and closing sessions, the most riveting presentation was delivered Friday evening by David Bryn-Jones, a professor of international relations at Minnesota's Carleton College. Placing the Korean War in a broad global perspective, Bryn-Jones acknowledged that both the United States and the Soviet Union shared responsibility for the tensions of the Cold War. Both sides, he said, erroneously assumed that the complexities of international relations could be reduced to the over-simplified theme of "democracy versus communism." Despite the fact that neither side had anything to gain from war, leaders of both nations also assumed, incorrectly in Bryn-Jones' view, that their Cold War counterpart was preparing for war. Criticizing both the American and Soviet leaderships as "[in]adequate to the occasion," he warned that, "If you get enough people to believe that war is inevitable and prepare for it, you will get your war. You may not get the consequences you want but you will get your war."¹⁷

Bryn-Jones was particularly critical of the United States for acting too hastily and for wasting the nation's resources. The Truman administration,

¹⁶Iowa Union Farmer, October, 1951, p. 4.

¹⁷"Address of Doctor David Bryn-Jones, to Iowa Farmers Union Convention, September, 1951," Stover Papers.

he charged, had too quickly concluded, in the aftermath of World War Two, that the United States could not peacefully co-exist with nations whose political and economic systems diverged from those of democracy and capitalism. That conclusion had led to the needless policy of containment and to the adoption of the Truman Doctrine, which he described as "an act of defeatism." Worse still, the narrow-minded focus on containing the Soviets had contributed to Truman's failure to follow through on Point Four, even though the financial outlay for the entire program was less than the total expenditures for one American battleship. Such misallocation of funds gave clear evidence that the United States did not understand what was happening in the world. While impoverished nations "raised their hands to grasp at anything that would give them salvation from . . . misery and want," the United States chose to fight poverty not with practical measures but with political pressure and guns. It was that misguided policy, Bryn-Jones concluded, that produced the non-recognition of the People's Republic of China and U.S. involvement in a war in Korea that had lasted "too long. So long that there won't be any real Korea left when it is over."¹⁸

Three months after the convention, the Iowa Union Farmer published, under the by-line of "Frank Talk," a full page article entitled "Debunking the

¹⁸Address of Doctor David Bryn-Jones, to Iowa Farmers Union Convention, September, 1951," Stover Papers.

Lies About Korea." Citing the nation's "growing war hysteria" and the attempt of the Truman administration to make support of U.S. action in Korea a test of patriotism, the article blamed the "ever increasing appropriations for a world arms race" for "bankrupting the U.S. taxpayers" and for "kill[ing] all hopes" for needed domestic programs. Written to encourage readers to "join in the demand for settling the cold war," the report aimed not at debating limitation or expansion of the war, and not at debating the relative benefits of sea versus land forces. Instead, the paper argued, Americans must debate whether the United States had any business in Korea in the first place.¹⁹

Answering its own question with a resounding "No," the Iowa Union Farmer listed four specific "lies" that it said had been fed to the American public to gain support for the war: that it was a joint U.N. effort, that it was "properly . . . supported by the U.S.," that it was being fought for "freedom and democracy," and that it was begun "to stop North Korean aggression." Each "lie" was dismissed as "bunk!" United Nations action, the article charged, was little more than a rubber stamping of American-made decisions, and even those decisions, as North Dakota's Senator William Langer was cited as charging, were unconstitutional because they had not

¹⁹Iowa Union Farmer, December, 1951, p. 2.

been approved by Congress. The "graft-ridden, fascist dictatorship" of Syngman Rhee, "where farm and labor leaders have been beaten, jailed and executed in Hitler fashion," was enough to refute any claims of "freedom and democracy." The article devoted most of its space, however, to the fourth "lie." Contrary to beginning as an attempt to repel a North Korean invasion, the war, the Iowa paper charged, had actually been initiated, "with assurances of U.S. support," by Rhee's South Korean government. The evidence behind the claim was a lengthy list of newspaper reports and U.S. government statements, all of which indicated that Syngman Rhee had for months prior to June, 1950, prepared for an attack on the north, and that the United States had similarly planned for the event.²⁰ The cumulative evidence was sufficient, the paper argued, "to cast a terrible cloud upon the entire 'aggression' charge involved in the Korean War." That the United

²⁰The specific items in the list, most of which were dealt with in great detail in I.F. Stone's The Hidden History of the Korean War, included: a March 14, 1950, New York Times report that Koreans had been imprisoned for opposing an invasion of North Korea; a June 25, 1950 A.P. report that South Korean troops had crossed the 38th parallel; Assistant Secretary of State John Hickerson's June, 1951, report to a Senate sub-committee that the U.S. had a skeleton resolution prepared prior to June 25, 1950, condemning the North Korean attack; New York Post and New York Herald Tribune reports of extensive U.S. military and diplomatic activity in Korea just prior to the outbreak of war; and Drew Pearson's report suggesting that wealthy Chinese affiliated with the China Lobby had made a huge killing in the soybean market by being tipped off concerning the impending hostilities.

States would acquiesce in Rhee's plan was, "Frank Talk" concluded, not a surprise, for the concept of "preventive war" was supported by Truman administration figures, including Navy Secretary Francis P. Matthews and Defense Secretary Louis A. Johnson.²¹

Returning to a persistent Farmers Union theme, "Debunking the Lies About Korea" also emphatically argued that economics played a major role in U.S. interest in Korea. Readers were encouraged to examine Fred Stover's 1951 pamphlet, The Contest Between the People and the Plunderers, to understand how the "money power" in America encouraged the preservation of colonialism for the sake of profit.²² In the case of Korea, "Debunking the Lies" argued, economic interest in South Korean mineral resources and the desire to increase profits through war-related spending were accompanied by the political designs of the China Lobby in re-establishing Chiang Kai-shek's authority in all of China. "Using the communist bogymen to fan the flames," these various interests had succeeded in involving the United States and the United Nations in "an evil, immoral action" that

²¹ Iowa Union Farmer, December, 1951, p. 2.

²² There is currently some question over the authorship of this particular pamphlet. Merle Hansen, a Farmers Union fieldman in the 1940's and 1950's, claims that it was written not by Fred Stover but by Homer Ayres. "Fred was a very capable writer on a variety of subjects," Hansen wrote in a 1992 tribute following Ayres' death, "but this pamphlet Homer authored." (Merle Hansen, "Homer Lee Ayres 1898-1992 (Revised)," a copy of which Hansen forwarded to me in a letter of August 6, 1992.)

neither party "had any business in the first place."²³

The U.S. State Department took a special interest in "Debunking the Lies About Korea," and in February, 1952, prepared a lengthy reply refuting the article's claims. The Department's response was precipitated in part by a January 10, 1952, request for clarification from Minnesota's Jim Youngdale. A Farmers Union supporter, and a long-time reader of and occasional contributor to the Iowa Union Farmer, Youngdale seemingly toyed with the State Department when he wrote:

Someone recently sent me a copy of some farm paper from Iowa with an article entitled "Debunking the Lies About Korea." I am enclosing a copy of this article.

I would like to know the fallacies in this article and how one would refute it. I have been challenged by a neighbor to refute this article and I find it difficult to do so from my first hand knowledge. I would appreciate a prompt reply.²⁴

If Youngdale's intent in sending such a cryptic request was to elicit a government response short on specifics and long on rhetoric, he got his

²³Iowa Union Farmer, December, 1951, p. 2.

²⁴Jim Youngdale to Dean Acheson, January 10, 1952, 795.00/1-1052, Record Group 59. Described by Michael Rogin in 1976 as "a Minnesota farmer and laborite-turned academic," Youngdale was a twenty-year farmer and occasional populist congressional candidate who, after earning a doctorate in American Studies in 1972, joined the faculty of the University of Minnesota. [Michael Rogin, review of Youngdale's Populism: A Psychohistorical Perspective, in American Historical Review LXXXI (October, 1976), pp. 982-983.] That a copy of the State Department reply to Youngdale was found not only in the State Department records but also in the Stover Papers provides further evidence that he may have been playing games with his request.

wish. Written by John M. Patterson, the Acting Chief of the State Department's Division of Public Liaison, the government reply did little more than repeat what the administration had been saying all along: that a total of forty-six nations had willingly made contributions of some kind to the war effort, and that no nation had been forced to rubber stamp a U.S. decision; that as commander-in-chief the President had the authority to send troops anywhere in the world, and that both Congress and the courts had frequently upheld that right; that Syngman Rhee was a freely elected official who had wide popular support; and that North Korea had instigated the war "without provocation and without warning." Patterson carefully crafted the response to highlight the image of the United States as but one participant in a cooperative fight for world democracy, revising his earlier drafts to eliminate any impression of the U.S. as a separate and powerful actor within the United Nations. This meticulously constructed argument was dismissed by Fred Stover and the Iowa Farmers Union as another example of deliberately manufactured misinformation. It was also rejected by other Farmers Union affiliates who in the first eighteen months of the war joined the Iowa group in protesting U.S. participation in the "police action" in Korea.²⁵

²⁵John M. Patterson to Jim Youngdale, February 28, 1952 (and earlier

Typical of these other affiliates was the Oregon Farmers Union, an organization that in July, 1950, attacked the Truman administration for "propping up the same discredited faces whom the people have learned to fear and hate."²⁶ Led by president Ronald E. Jones, the Oregon group was particularly concerned that support for such figures as Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai-shek, and Inochina's Bao Dai signalled a lack of understanding on the part of the United States of "the very evils that the masses are determined to end." While democracy, the Oregon Farmer Union argued, was "the most revolutionary idea which mankind has ever heard of," U.S. foreign policy did nothing to promote its advancement. Instead, by attempting "to make peace and prepare for global war at the same time," the newspaper declared at the end of 1950, the Truman administration had:

failed in any adequate measure to render those constructive services to the impoverished masses of the world for which our wealth and our skills fitted us and which might have made friends for us among the peoples rather than among the puppet regimes.²⁷

The Oregon group agreed with Fred Stover that this failure to support the undated draft), 795.00/1-1052, Record Group 59. In re-drafting the response, Patterson replaced a reference to North Korean aggression "against the principles and aims of the United States and the United Nations" with the simpler and less revealing charge of aggression "against the Republic of Korea." He also dropped a reference to the United States as the "most able member of the U.N."

²⁶Oregon Farmer Union, July 15, 1950, p. 2.

²⁷Oregon Farmer Union, December 15, 1950, p. 2.

democratic appeals of the world's peoples was the result of U.S. policy being controlled by profit-and-power-seeking elites. Events in Korea, the Oregonians proclaimed, demonstrated the futility of "expect[ing] a democratic foreign policy to emerge from the thinking of Wall Street lawyers, ex-Wall Street bankers, big industrialists, and ex-generals." Before we could get "a foreign policy based on economic democracy," the Oregon Farmer Union announced, "we must get foreign policy makers who believe in economic democracy."²⁸

Unlike Fred Stover, the leaders of the Oregon Farmers Union anticipated that such new leadership might be found in Robert Taft or in Herbert Hoover. Their peace proposals, which called for withdrawal of U.S. troops accompanied by a simultaneous build-up of American military forces, had been rejected outright by Stover. Oregon officials, however, were more receptive. The Hoover-Taft program, they felt, could potentially "buy time for peace" and was therefore "a calculated risk we can afford to take." Whatever its impact, they argued, it would be an immense improvement over the policies of Harry Truman, whose actions in the field of foreign affairs, with the exception of his dismissal of General MacArthur, were judged both inadequate and potentially destructive. Truman's occasional proposals for

²⁸Oregon Farmer Union, July 15, 1950, p. 2.

peace, the Oregon group believed, weren't "meant to be taken seriously." Until the administration abandoned its position that "any settlement on terms short of unconditional subservience to American policy" was "appeasement," the President's calls for peace would remain nothing but "blast[s] in the cold war which Truman [had] started in 1947 with the announcement of the Truman Doctrine"²⁹

In its opposition to the Korean War, another northwestern affiliate, the Montana Farmers Union, similarly emphasized both American support for non-democratic regimes and the economic gains sought by U.S. business. Following the vocal lead of its secretary-treasurer, N.J. Dougherty, the Montana group pointed to the irony of "United States diplomats, as representatives of the truly democratic form of government and believing in democratic ideals . . . wholeheartedly backing such . . . fascistic leaders as Franco, Tito, Chiang Kai-shek, and Syngman Rhee." In doing so, Dougherty argued in a Christmas wish editorial in 1950, the Truman administration was "misrepresenting [American] ideals."³⁰

Like their Iowa counterparts, Montana Farmers Union members applauded the dismissal of General MacArthur, supported Colorado Senator Edwin

²⁹Oregon Farmer Union, January 15, 1951, p. 2, April 15, 1951, p. 1, November 15, 1951, p. 4, and March 15, 1951, p. 4.

³⁰Montana Farmers Union News, December 27, 1950, p. 8.

Johnson's 1951 call for a cease-fire, and participated in the Chicago Peace Congress held in the summer of 1951. State affiliates passed and sent to President Truman resolutions calling not only for an end to the Korean War, but also for the removal from Korea of all non-Korean combatants and for the elimination of foreign exploitation of that nation's natural resources. The latter implication that the United States had an economic interest in Korea was one of the key features of the very lengthy international affairs resolution passed at the state organization's 1951 annual convention. Most notably, that resolution called for a full investigation of the China Lobby and its role in the war.³¹

The Eastern and Northeastern divisions of the Farmers Union, with headquarters in, respectively, New Jersey and New York, also vocally opposed U.S. involvement in Korea. The Eastern Division, headed by president Alvin Christman and executive secretary Louis Slocum, stressed in particular the onerous impact of the war on the ability of small farmers to make financial ends meet. In the month that fighting began, the organization reacted bitterly to an Atlantic Monthly article arguing that the nation's "best defense" rested in part upon a lowering of agricultural prices.

³¹Montana Farmers Union News, April 25, 1951, p. 8, September 26, 1951, p. 3, August 22, 1951, p. 4, November 22, 1950, p. 4, November 28, 1951, supplement p. 2.

Harvard economist Sumner H. Slichter, in writing the article, had emphasized that American survival in the Cold War required an "adjustment in the prices of farm products to long-run conditions of supply and demand." In arguing against the cherished Farmers Union beliefs in parity and price supports, Slichter proposed that "lower food prices [would release] dollars for the purchase of houses, automobiles, television sets, and many other things." To Christman, Slocum, and their Farmers Union membership, what Slichter was proposing was that farmers alone should make financial sacrifices "so the rest of the population will be able to buy cheap food and have enough left over for television sets." Two weeks into the war, the board of directors of the Eastern Farmers Union held a special meeting to discuss this issue of the impact of the war on farmers. The result of the meeting was an urgent request to both President Truman and the Congress to pursue, through the United Nations, an immediate peace in Korea. The appeal received broad organizational support seven months later when it was included as part of the foreign policy resolution passed at the Eastern Division's annual convention.³²

Following a theme advanced by other Farmers Union affiliates, the

³²Sumner H. Slichter, "Our Best Defense," Atlantic Monthly CLXXXV (June, 1950), pp. 21-22; Eastern Union Farmer, July-August, 1950, pp. 1 and 4, February, 1951, p. 5.

Eastern Division coupled an opposition to American business ventures abroad with a strong advocacy of the right of national self-determination. The foreign policy resolution adopted in February, 1951, cited the "desire of millions of colonial peoples for self-determination and economic security" and recommended that American policies "be re-oriented towards a policy of non-interference in the struggles of these people for self-determination." The convention itself resoundingly applauded Fred Stover's keynote presentation in which he quoted radical sociologist Scott Nearing's commentary on American business as "stand[ing] for the proposition that the U.S. economy requires military spending as the price of its continuance." In the address, which was printed word for word in two successive issues of the Eastern Union Farmer, Stover reminded the audience of Henry Luce's dream that Asia one day would be worth billions of dollars to the United States, but he predicted that the Asians themselves would not cooperate. "[T]hey do not intend," Stover claimed, "to substitute an American Century for the British Century, now that they are shed of the latter." Stover further argued that while the American people valued the United Nations, they did not believe that it "should be used by the American century crowd as a fig leaf to cover its nakedness in Asia."³³

³³Eastern Union Farmer, February, 1951, pp. 2 and 5, and March, 1951, p. 4. See also the Iowa Union Farmer, February, 1951, p. 2, and, for details of

Like other Farmers Union affiliates, the Eastern Division also supported Senator Edwin Johnson's senate resolution calling for a cease-fire on June 25, 1951, the one-year anniversary of the war, and for the return of all prisoners of war and the departure of all non-Korean military personnel from North and South Korea by December 1, 1951. Christman and Slocum were so impressed with the resolution that they printed it in full in the June, 1951, issue of the Eastern Union Farmer. The Colorado Senator's eloquently worded appeals to avoid the insanity and destruction of war, to deter the potential breeding of "bitter racial hatred," and to allow Asians to decide their own fate in the spirit of "Asia for Asiatics," climaxed with the hope that "it is never too early for God-fearing and peace-loving people to earnestly endeavor to stop needless human slaughter."³⁴

The Northeastern Division of the National Farmers Union also reprinted the Johnson Resolution and, noting that the commercial press had generally buried news of the proposal, called upon its members to contact their congressmen expressing support for the measure. Division president Archie Wright, one of the most outspoken figures in the National Farmers Union and a close friend of Fred Stover, shared the Iowa farm leader's nostalgic other Stover addresses in New Jersey in early 1951, Eastern Union Farmer, May, 1951, p. 1, and June, 1951, pp. 1 and 3.

³⁴Eastern Union Farmer, June, 1951, p. 2.

attachment to the policies of Franklin Roosevelt, his mixed feelings about the usefulness of the firing of General MacArthur, and his sixth sense impression weeks before the war that something was about to break. But the persistent focus of Wright's commentary on the Korean War was its devastating impact on small farmers. Whether decrying the evolution of America's "warfare state," as he did at the Northeastern Division's annual convention in October, 1951, or generating an analogy between the Truman administration's "containment" of Communism abroad and its simultaneous "containment" of farmers at home, as he did in a letter to Northeastern Division officials in December, 1951, the colorful Wright never strayed far from his argument that the farmer was the "forgotten man" in the American economy and that the war would only make it worse.³⁵

In addition to Wright's focus on the war's damning impact on American farmers, the membership of the Northeastern Division joined Iowa, Oregon, Montana, and the Eastern Division in criticizing President Truman's actions in Korea for their broader Cold War implications. Two months after the fighting began, the Northeastern Union Farmer argued that America's

³⁵Northeastern Union Farmer, July, 1951, p. 8, May-June, 1951, p. 2, and November, 1951, pp. 1-8; Iowa Union Farmer, October 21, 1950, p. 7; Archie Wright, "To All Officers and Delegates," June 6, 1950, and Archie Wright, "To All Officers and Delegates," December 11, 1951, Box 3, New York Milk Shed Records.

"planned mobilization goes far beyond anything necessary to pulverize Korea." By April, 1951, despite the removal of General MacArthur, the organization was charging U.S. policymakers with "the deliberate, purposeful brutalization of a whole people." After encouraging American officials, at its annual convention in 1950, to "seek openly the ways of peace and not war," the Northeastern Division in 1951 demanded that the American military "be kept . . . out of civilian and diplomatic affairs," that the U.S. military budget "be brought into conformity with that of other nations," and that the administration actively pursue a policy of world disarmament. Reaffirming the Farmers Union position that American troops encircling the globe contributed to an "aggressive policy of business penetration in foreign lands," Archie Wright and the membership of the Northeastern Division asked that such encouragement of "business profits at public expense" be ended. As 1951 closed, the organization added to the suggestion of business collusion by running a front-page story entitled "Soy Beans and the Korean War," repeating Fred Stover's charge that nationalist Chinese business interests, in cooperation with the China Lobby, had profited through advance knowledge of impending hostilities.³⁶

³⁶Northeastern Union Farmer, August, 1950, p. 2, April, 1951, p. 8, November, 1951, pp. 1-8, and December, 1951, p. 1; Iowa Union Farmer, October 21, 1950, p. 7.

Chester A. Graham, who had served as secretary-treasurer of the Michigan Farmers Union in the 1930's and as a National Farmers Union organizer and recruiter in the 1940's, was in the years of the Korean War the radio voice of the North Dakota Farmers Union. In that capacity, Graham added to the growing Farmers Union opposition to the war through daily broadcasts that focused almost exclusively on the dangers of an all-too powerful military in American life. The French political figure Georges Clemenceau's observation that "peace is too important to be left to soldiers" became the guiding theme of Graham's broadcasts. He praised newspapers that criticized the growing militarization of American society and hailed as "an historic day of victory for our form of government" the decision by President Truman to dismiss General MacArthur. Unfortunately, Graham argued, "the tragic bungling of the so-called cease fire talks" that followed MacArthur's dismissal symbolized both the persistent desire of the military to save face and its inability, or unwillingness, to remember the fundamental goal of the Korean War: "a united and free Korea, free from domination by any outside nations." Military domination of policymaking conjured up for Graham images of past civilizations that had erroneously relied on "what they thought was invincible military power." Continued advocacy of such a program, Graham suggested, would lead the United States

down the same unfortunate road once traversed by Egypt, Assyria, Rome, the British navy, and the followers of Kaiser Wilhelm II.³⁷

Whether focusing on the growing power of the military, on the negative impact of Cold War events on America's small farmers, on the expansion of U.S. business interests into foreign lands, or on the unilateral character of American policy, Farmers Union affiliates opposing the Korean War found a common voice in a 1950 pamphlet entitled Let's Join the Human Race. Written by Stringfellow Barr, president of the Foundation for World Government and a University of Virginia history professor, the pamphlet was praised by Farmers Union officials who, in the states of Montana, Oregon, and North Dakota, ordered extra copies for their memberships. One North Dakota county organization invited Barr to speak at its quarterly convention in June, 1951, where, the organization reported, he "stressed the importance of this country taking the lead in winning the battle for peace."³⁸

³⁷Radio transcripts of Graham's broadcasts of December 29, 1950, March 17, 1951, April 13, 1951, May 5, 1951, and September 15, 1951, Box 12, Chester A. Graham Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

³⁸Montana Farmers Union News, January 24, 1951, p. 3; Oregon Farmer Union, May 15, 1951, p. 1; Glenn Talbott to Palmer Weber, January 3, 1951, Box 9, Folder 16, Talbott Family Papers; "Minutes of Quarterly Convention," June 23, 1951, Box 1, Folder 3, Williams County Farmers Union Records, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck. I discovered a copy of

Let's Join the Human Race was a powerful and clearly worded statement that mirrored many of the ideas offered in Fred Stover's Atomic Blessing or Atomic Blasting and in his The Contest Between the People and the Plunderers. Just as Stover had questioned a number of the premises upon which American decision makers established policy, so, too, did Barr criticize the Truman administration for a series of "false assumptions" guiding or, Barr more accurately charged, misguiding the American approach to world affairs. Let's Join the Human Race critiqued four such assumptions that, Barr suggested, collectively contributed to the erroneous policy of "containing Russia" and prevented the United States from "doing our share to see that the human race dwells on this planet with decency and dignity."³⁹

The first of the assumptions, that "Russia is all that stands between mankind and a stable peace," was dismissed as a "childish belief" that misread reality. Most of the world's population, Barr argued, was concerned not with the ideological or economic confrontation between capitalists and Communists, but with physical survival from day to day. Misery, not Communism, was the basic problem for the vast majority of the world's

Let's Join the Human Race in Box 22 of the Elmer A. Benson Papers at the Minnesota State Historical Society in St. Paul.

³⁹Stringfellow Barr, Let's Join the Human Race (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 25.

people. And so, Barr concluded, "if all the Russians in the world obligingly died this evening, and if all the Communists of whatever race were so kind as to commit suicide tomorrow at noon sharp," poverty, hunger, and disease would remain, and the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America would still insist on better lives.⁴⁰

The second assumption, that "American 'know-how' and American money" were enough to guarantee improvements in the world economy, was rejected as a fatal failure to comprehend that misery was a world problem, not a U.S. problem to be settled by U.S. funds. Repeating almost word for word an analogy previously introduced by National Farmers Union president Jim Patton, Barr claimed that it was counterproductive for the United States "to go on playing Santa Claus." Santa Claus, after all, distinguished between good little boys and girls and bad little boys and girls, and at Christmas time provided gifts only to those in the first category. The United States, in similar fashion, provided post-war aid only to "good" nations outside of the "bad" Soviet orbit, and even then provided the bulk of assistance only to those nations deemed most vital to American security. Barr pointed specifically to Marshall Plan aid to Western Europe, which he observed was then used by the Dutch, French, and British to "shoot down" Indonesians, Indo-Chinese, and Malaysians. By playing Santa Claus, and by picking and

⁴⁰Barr, Let's Join the Human Race, p. 7.

choosing who would get the gifts, the Truman administration created a wealth of disappointed nations "who hope[d] to get even with Santa some day." More generally, though, the American approach missed the key argument that "the world economy is a world problem, not one facet of an American foreign policy, not the fourth point of anything, but the first point in the world's agenda."⁴¹

Stringfellow Barr devoted the bulk of his argument in Let's Join the Human Race to the third "false assumption": that "free enterprise can do the job better than government." In a critique that clearly mirrored the Farmers Union disdain for the supposed greed of American capitalism, Barr observed that "private capital goes only where those who manage it think it can make the most money." This desire for profit, and the accompanying business desire to avoid investment in areas of the world that had the potential for disruptive revolution, meant a selective dispersal of private funds to relatively safe areas of the world and the omission of funds from regions perhaps more in need. World misery could not be successfully challenged through such a selective process, but even if it could be, Barr argued, there

⁴¹Barr, Let's Join the Human Race, pp. 7-13. Barr's observation about the "fourth point" was part of his running assessment of Truman's Point Four program, which he approved of for the general principle of economic aid but which he opposed for its insufficient funding and for its American-centeredness.

was "not enough private capital available" for the magnitude of the task. What was therefore needed was a greater pool of funds, a pool generated through a combination of national and international governmental resources.⁴²

The need for a broader approach to the problem of world misery, including the necessity of greater funds, led to Barr's rejection of the fourth "false assumption": that "the job can be done on the basis of small yearly appropriations." Massive resources were needed, resources that matched perhaps the two trillion dollars that World War Two had cost mankind. Yet, Barr lamented, annual funding for the United Nations, the only agency then in existence with the potential for tackling world hunger and poverty, amounted to less than one fifty-thousandth of that World War Two total. Until sufficient funds were allocated, he argued, there was no hope for the human race. And as long as the United States insisted on "treating symptoms" by, for example, dispatching troops to Korea, instead of treating the disease of world despair itself, the world was "in for very rough weather."⁴³

Barr's assessment of American foreign policy differed in certain

⁴²Barr, Let's Join the Human Race, pp. 13-14.

⁴³Barr, Let's Join the Human Race, pp. 22 and 30.

respects from the one offered by the membership of the Farmers Union. As president of the Federation for World Government, Barr was interested in establishing an international body whose role was not, as he felt the United Nations' was, "subject to the whims of national governments."⁴⁴ His Wendell Willkie-like "one worldism" went beyond what most members of the Farmers Union, who still believed in the efficacy of the United Nations, were willing to pursue. In addition, Barr's belief that U.S. businesses avoided investment in potentially volatile areas was at odds with the Farmers Union insistence that U.S. capitalists, backed by military might, eagerly sought expansion to every corner of the globe. Yet there was more agreement than disagreement. Let's Join the Human Race was widely praised by Farmers Union leaders, and its words and sentiments were echoed in a number of organizational documents, including a 1951 Minnesota resolution claiming that "the issue of 'communism' in foreign affairs is not the basic one, [for] the common people in many nations are revolting against centuries of starvation, corruption and peasantry under feudalism."⁴⁵

The refusal to accept U.S. action in Korea as a necessary step in containing Communism represented a logical continuation of Farmers Union

⁴⁴Barr, Let's Join the Human Race, pp. 23.

⁴⁵"An Open Letter to Farmers Union Members," Box 23, Folder "Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers undated 1951," Benson Papers.

positions that had been organizational dogma since the end of World War Two: rejection of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, negative assessments of universal military training and a peace-time draft, and vocal criticisms of both N.A.T.O. and administration attempts to corner the market on atomic energy. In raising their voices against the sending of U.S. troops to Korea, the Iowa, Oregon, Montana, Eastern, and Northeastern Farmers Union affiliates carried forward the banner of protest first unfurled in 1946 by National Farmers Union president Jim Patton. His characterization that year of President Truman's policies as "imperialist adventures backed to the hilt by American diplomacy and American arms"⁴⁶ had set the tone for the Farmers Union denunciation of U.S. foreign policy. It also had set in motion a growing image of the National Farmers Union as a cohesive body whose insistent opposition to America's Cold War rhetoric had allowed it to escape its earlier organizational history of internal bickering. But the Korean War, it quickly became clear, shattered that image.

⁴⁶National Union Farmer, October 1, 1946, p. 3. See Chapter 2, p. 52.

Chapter Seven

An Airing of Differences

The consistency of the National Farmers Union criticism of American foreign policy from 1946 to 1950 led to the understandable assumption that the same organizational condemnation would greet U.S. action in Korea. But as the fighting in Korea moved from the initial invasion to prolonged stalemate and slowly toward peace, the American public witnessed not a united front but a surprising and bitter split within the Farmers Union over President Truman's policies abroad. Guided by Farmers Union precedents, a number of organizational affiliates continued the assault on American policies. Others, however, made a startling reversal by falling in line with the Truman administration's denunciations of Communist expansion. With Farmers Union members and affiliates across the nation scrambling to choose sides, the organization, by the end of the Korean War in 1953, lost its cherished position as a leading critic of U.S. foreign policy. It became instead a disoriented group, divided, as was much of the nation, by the tensions of the Cold War.

The split in the Farmers Union surprised Americans accustomed to the organization's consistently negative critique of Truman's policies. But observers more familiar with the group recognized that what spilled over into public debate after June, 1950, were differences of opinion that had been developing for years, differences that were most evident in the increasingly divergent views of National Farmers Union president Jim Patton and Iowa Farmers Union president Fred Stover. Although the two men, from 1946 to 1950, had stood side by side in public opposition to President Truman's foreign policy, in private their views had steadily parted company. While Stover held fast to Farmers Union tradition, Patton had begun to dismiss even the quintessential Farmers Union belief that profit-driven U.S. expansion abroad crippled the nation's small farmers at home. By the time of the Korean War, he and his adherents no longer stressed the connection between the nation's foreign and domestic policies as a driving force in the organization's program. Nor did they continue to emphasize, as Stover and his followers did, two other arguments that until Korea had been publicly-stated organizational dogma: that unilateral American action impacted negatively on international harmony, and that the American focus on national security negated a needed emphasis on international and cooperative programs for humanitarian and social progress. In short, with

the beginning of the Korean War, Fred Stover and his adherents continued their role as administration critics, while Jim Patton and his proponents abandoned the role of foreign policy critic and openly adopted the Cold War rhetoric of the very administration they had been criticizing since the end of World War II.

Without descending too deeply into the pit of psychohistory, much of the explanation for this remarkable shift lies in the personal backgrounds of the two men who figured prominently as the chief spokesmen for the opposing factions. Jim Patton and Fred Stover had come to the National Farmers Union bearing one piece of similar baggage: experience with and adherence to the domestic and international policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Patton's earliest successes in the Farmers Union had been facilitated by his desire to champion New Deal legislation. He had likewise supported President Roosevelt's pre-Pearl Harbor desires to contribute to the fight against Nazi Germany by supporting, as a member of William Allen White's Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, both lend-lease and the destroyers-for-bases deal with Britain. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor a year after Patton's election as National Farmers Union president in 1940, the Kansas-born farm leader extended to Roosevelt the organization's all-out support for the Allied effort. Impressed by Patton's work, Roosevelt

appointed him to a series of wartime agencies, including the Economic Stabilization Board and the War Mobilization and Recovery Administration. With Allied success apparent in 1945, the President honored Patton even further by inviting him to serve as a member of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations conference in San Francisco.¹

Fred Stover's experience with Roosevelt paralleled that of Patton, except that the Iowa farm leader served the 32nd President not only on boards dealing with foreign affairs but also as a member of two New Deal domestic agencies. Oddly enough, Stover's involvement with Roosevelt began when he was a member not of the Farmers Union but of the rival American Farm Bureau Federation. As president of the Cerro Gordo County Farm Bureau, Stover was asked to administer the Agricultural Adjustment Administration's corn and hog program in Iowa. Success at this endeavor led to similar positions in Michigan and Pennsylvania, and to Stover's 1939 appointment with the Commodity Credit Corporation in which he monitored

¹In addition to Charles H. Livermore's dissertation, biographical information on Jim Patton's early career can be found in: Crampton, Ideology of a Pressure Group, pp. 115-120; Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, pp. 149-150; Dyson, Farmers' Organizations, pp. 224-227; Dyson, Red Harvest, pp. 189-192; Carey Longmire, "Colorado Cyclone," unpublished March 13, 1946, article in Box 27, Folder 17, Patton Papers; and Steven A. Chambers, "Relations Between Leaders of the Iowa and National Farmers Union Organizations, 1941 to 1950," Honors thesis (Iowa State University, 1961), pp. 15-24.

the corn program in ten states. Following American entrance into World War Two, President Roosevelt appointed Stover to the Department of Agriculture's War Board. When the American Farm Bureau Federation, partly as a result of President Allen Kline's opposition to government involvement in the free enterprise system, withdrew its support from Franklin Roosevelt, Stover abandoned the Farm Bureau and joined the Iowa division of the Farmers Union. Elected vice president of the organization in 1944, Stover succeeded to the presidency a year later following the resignation of President O.B. Weber. Fittingly, Weber's resignation came partially as a consequence of his anti-New Deal positions.²

Aside from a dedication to President Roosevelt, Jim Patton and Fred Stover shared little else in common. The son of a mining engineer, Patton grew up on a Colorado cooperative, earned business administration and economics degrees at Western State College, and entered the Farmers Union through the door of the Farmers Union Life Insurance Company, an agency he began in 1932 at the age of thirty. This route led one observer to note that Patton resembled less a farmer and "more a well-tailored bureaucrat of

²While no historian has yet attempted a biography of Stover, information about his life can be found in: Chambers, "Relations," pp. 25-41; U.S. Farmers Association, Biographical Sketch; and in documents scattered throughout the as-yet unprocessed Stover Papers at the University of Iowa.

private industry who spends his days in conference."³ Patton's persistent emphasis throughout his years as president of the Farmers Union on the life insurance aspect of the organization reinforced the impression of a man more in touch with the business side of farming than with the actual day-to-day aspects of tilling the soil.

Fred Stover was more the farmer than the businessman. Born in 1898 to German immigrants, Stover grew up in Iowa in a conservative environment stressing family values and hard work. Although he briefly attended a local commercial college, as the oldest son in the family he spent far more time working in the fields than he ever did in any classroom. The experience led him to value the ideal of the family farm and to argue that his "first and last real ambition was to be a farmer. . . ." Starting with what he called a "modest ideal of 160 acres" that he rented from his father in 1924, Stover eventually expanded his holdings to the 240-acre property that he maintained throughout the rest of his life.⁴ Described on one occasion as "a crusader, not a politician,"⁵ Stover was, more than anything else, a family farmer of the Jeffersonian mold. His 240 acres disqualified him from literal "yeoman" status, but he nevertheless prided himself on his

³Crampton, Ideology of a Pressure Group, p. 115.

⁴F.W. Stover, "An Epistle to Our Offspring," 1978 open letter, Stover Papers.

⁵Chambers, "Relations," pp. 60.

independence and viewed the primary and even exclusive role of the National Farmers Union as helping to preserve the threatened lifestyle of America's small farmers.

While Jim Patton gave what frequently qualified as lip service to this same goal, his attention focused more often on the world of political power. This "smooth political operator,"⁶ as Alonzo Hamby accurately has described him, publicly criticized the growing influence of the larger Farm Bureau, partly because, like Stover, he was offended by its support of corporate agriculture. But Patton's opposition to the Bureau, unlike Stover's, was dictated even more so by a fear that the growth and influence of that group detracted from the potential power of the Farmers Union. To Patton, then, the Farmers Union was less a vehicle for the preservation of family farmers and more an avenue for both organizational and personal power. Whereas Stover only infrequently appeared before Congressional committees and even more infrequently was sought out by government officials for advice, Patton was a constant guest in Washington and, despite his vocal opposition to President Truman's foreign policy, was recognized as a "quiet power in [the] capital."⁷ The two Farmers Union leaders, then,

⁶Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, p. 150.

⁷Mac Lowry, "Farm Union's Patton Quiet Power in Capital," Atlanta Journal, October 20, 1949, p. 31.

were motivated by distinctly different agendas. If forced by circumstances to choose between furthering the welfare of individual farmers and preserving the political power of the National Farmers Union, Stover would quickly take the first course, while Patton would not hesitate to take the second.

The Korean War presented just such a choice. While its criticism of American foreign policy between 1946 and 1950 had occasionally focused the nation's attention on the Farmers Union, and while that attention had from time to time stressed the suspected subversive nature of the group, the fairly inept charges of Communist infiltration had been rather easily dismissed by the membership of the Farmers Union. But when American boys began fighting and dying in Korea, against what the nation was told was blatant Communist aggression, the stakes involved in challenging the Truman administration got higher. When Senator Styles Bridges resurrected the charges of Communist infiltration in the Farmers Union so soon after the start of the war, it was clear to Patton that the organization would lose whatever power and prestige it had earned through the years should it continue its openly adversarial role. He therefore publicly abandoned the aggressive criticism of American foreign policy out of a fear that to

continue to do so would mean the end of the Farmers Union as a political force. Patton's decision, in the opinion of Homer Ayres, started the Farmers Union on its path toward being a "political group" and away from its traditional role of "being simply for the good of farmers and ranchers."⁸ Fred Stover, for his part, continued to maintain that acquiescence in an aggressive U.S. policy remained inconsistent with the future of America's small farmers and so persisted in his role as critic. These opposite roads led to the bitter conflict that featured Patton and Stover as the chief adversaries, but which quickly enveloped the entire membership of the Farmers Union.

Jim Patton's about-face on American foreign policy had been anticipated even before Korea. Starting in mid-1949, Stover and others witnessed events within the Farmers Union that pointed not only to a shift in organizational policy but also to a purging of the organization's most progressive elements. The rationale behind the change seemed to Stover to be a combination of political opportunism and fear. Responding in November, 1949, to National Guardian editor Cedric Belfrage's concern that Patton was "about to be captured by the Democratic Party,"⁹ Stover described Patton as a "big hearted" individual whom he believed would much rather continue

⁸Homer Ayres to the author, April 24, 1992, p. 5.

⁹Cedric Belfrage to Fred Stover, November 17, 1949, Stover Papers.

going "our direction than the other direction." But, he added:

the pressures on him . . . have been tremendous and he shows signs of getting old and tired. No doubt he has that feeling of futility when he looks in our direction and can see many easy gains for his organization and for himself when he looks the other direction. I do not like to peg him as an opportunist; I love him too much for that. But, at the same time, I have to admit that all signs point that way. . . .¹⁰

The view of Patton as an individual who had "lost a lot of his best fighting qualities" and who had "been taken in" by the desire to fit into the mainstream politics of the Democratic Party was repeated by Stover in letters to Montana Farmers Union member Harold Ridenour in September, 1949, and to the Peace Information Center's Elizabeth Moos in June, 1950.¹¹

While Fred Stover viewed Patton with pity, he held nothing but pure contempt for other Farmers Union leaders whom he described as "schemers" looking "to make of the Farmers Union a farm front for the pitiful and incompetent Truman administration." High on this list of "grand-standing peacocks" determined to "leave no stone unturned to tie the Farmers Union to the donkey's tail"¹² were North Dakota Farmers Union president Glenn

¹⁰F.W. Stover to Cedric Balfrage, November 22, 1949, Stover Papers.

¹¹F.W. Stover to Harold Ridenour, September 30, 1949, and F.W. Stover to Mrs. Elizabeth Moos, June 2, 1950, both in the Stover Papers.

¹²F.W. Stover to Archie Wright, December 21, 1949, and F.W. Stover to Lee Fryer, November 23, 1949, Stover Papers.

Talbott and Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association boss M.W. Thatcher. Condemned by Montana's Harold Ridenour as "the political assassins from the twin city axis,"¹³ Talbott and Thatcher were seen by Stover, Ridenour, and Northeastern Division president Archie Wright as the architects behind the attempt to rid the Farmers Union of figures whose views were deemed too "progressive" for the climate of the times. Talbott and Thatcher walked a fine line in their efforts, wanting on one hand to maintain the illusion of their own progressivism, while simultaneously judging, to borrow a phrase from another era, the political correctness of their Farmers Union associates. In the purge that ensued, Talbott and Thatcher, Stover's "Machiavellian prima donnas,"¹⁴ joined with Jim Patton in orchestrating the changing nature of the Farmers Union.

Between 1949 and mid-1950, in a process that reminded Archie Wright "of the Massachusetts witchcraft hunt of 1692,"¹⁵ a number of Farmers Union officials either left or were forced out of the organization. Lee Fryer, who had worked in Jim Patton's office in Denver, felt the frustration of working for a group whose personality was shifting so rapidly and so left Denver in 1949 to begin, in Seattle, Washington, a farm service organization

¹³Harold Ridenour to Fred Stover, September 14, 1949, Stover Papers.

¹⁴F.W. Stover to Cedric Belfrage, November 22, 1949, Stover Papers.

¹⁵Archie Wright to Fred Stover, December 9, 1949, Stover Papers.

that he hoped would be of more value.¹⁶

Cliff Durr, described by Alabama Farmers Union president Aubrey Williams as "one of the ablest and most brilliant lawyers in America," did not have the opportunity, as Lee Fryer did, of leaving the Farmers Union on his own accord. Instead, after serving briefly as a legal counsel for the group, Durr was fired in 1950 when his wife, Virginia, an outspoken peace advocate, signed a peace petition sponsored by a group described in the media as a "Communist-front" organization. In letters to both Jim Patton and Glenn Talbott, Aubrey Williams labelled the event a regrettable "turning point in the affairs and future of the Farmers Union." The firing of Durr, he wrote, represented "the acts of men caught up in a national hysteria" and brought to his mind an assessment of hypocrisy represented by the phrase, "what you are speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say." Williams directed to Patton a personal observation that accurately reflected what Stover, Wright, and Ridenour had by now accepted as truth - that the Farmers Union president had succumbed to the temptations of the political limelight:

I have wished for a long time that you would get out of Washington, and spend your time out among farming people. Washington has a way of corrupting a man, and making him seek glamour - and tinselled articles. He gets unconsciously bitten with the bug of seeing his picture and name in the papers, and that will do something to even the

¹⁶Lee Fryer to Fred Stover, November 15, 1949, Stover Papers.

strongest of men.¹⁷

The witchhunt impacted not only on individual Farmers Union members but on state organizations as well. Minnesota's Einer Kuivinen, who had written to President Truman that the nation's "present foreign policy [was] leading us into a blind alley," was accused by the national leadership of "administrative inefficiency" and was forced out as state president. In Montana, President Don Chapman used what Harold Ridenour described as "bona fide red baiting" in his attempt to block progressive measures at the state organization's 1949 convention. Chapman's "unprincipled war on progressive individuals, tactics, and policies" ripped the convention wide open, pitting Chapman and Jim Patton's supporters against a membership that "showed no enthusiasm for the aid and comfort given the Truman policies by top leadership."¹⁸ Among the Montana organization's elected officials, only secretary-treasurer N.J. Dougherty remained steadfast in his

¹⁷Minutes of the Alabama Farmers Union Board of Directors Meeting at Montgomery, April 12, 1951, Box 33, Williams Papers; Aubrey Williams to Glenn Talbott, May 16, 1951, and Aubrey Williams to Jim Patton, May 14, 1951, both in Box 36, Folder "National Farmers Union, Patton 1950-1951," Williams Papers.

¹⁸Einer Kuivinen, "Peace is Paramount," undated leaflet published by the Committee for a Progressive State Legislature, Stover Papers; F.W. Stover to Harold Ridenour, November 30, 1949, Stover Papers; F.W. Stover to Archie Wright, December 21, 1949, Stover Papers; Harold Ridenour to Fred Stover, November 8, 1949, Stover Papers.

opposition to American foreign policy.¹⁹

Because of his widely-publicized rejection of Truman's policies, Fred Stover had every reason to believe, as he told Archie Wright in December, 1949, "that Iowa [was] next on the purge list."²⁰ He had, in fact, already seen signs of what was to come. Writing to Cedric Belfrage in November, 1949, Stover described an attempt by Glenn Talbott and M.W. Thatcher to financially squeeze the Iowa Farmers Union to death by withholding from the group educational funds traditionally distributed to state affiliates by Thatcher's Grain Terminal Association. The two men also had ordered the closing of the Farmers Union Livestock Association's Commission House in Chicago which was, Stover explained, "the house where most Farmers Union members in Iowa ship their livestock." The closing, he argued, was prompted by a fear that because Iowa was the only state:

that drastically increased its livestock marketing to the Farmers Union in recent years and since the voting strength in F.U.L.A. rests in volume of livestock marketed, there seemed to be danger to some of them that the progressive element in Iowa might have a real voice in the Farmers Union Livestock Association.

¹⁹Dougherty's refusal to support Chapman's endorsement of Truman's policies may have contributed to his mysterious "resignation" from the organization in October, 1952, in order "to enter other work." (Montana Farmers Union News, October 22, 1952, p. 8.)

²⁰F.W. Stover to Archie Wright, December 21, 1949, Stover Papers. The Fred Stover/Archie Wright correspondence from December 1949 to October 1950 sheds more light on the internal dissension in the Farmers Union than any other source!

Although Stover admitted that the motives behind these actions "cannot be proven," he was nevertheless convinced that they were prompted by the "many counts against us," primarily the group's role in "leading the fight against the Truman foreign policy. . . ." The financial squeeze left the Iowa Farmers Union in "pretty tough circumstances," but, as Stover told Harold Ridenour, he "would rather be bankrupt financially than be bankrupt politically and ideologically as some of our Farmers Union people are."²¹

Fred Stover eventually concluded that the most "bankrupt" of the Farmers Union figures was Glenn Talbott. Although Stover had chided Talbott on numerous occasions in 1949 as a "prima donna" and as a "grand-standing peacock," his anger at the North Dakota Farmers Union president peaked only in May, 1950. Having returned in April from his appearance at the Australian Peace Congress, Stover was invited by Willard Uphaus to share his Australian experience in an address to the Mid-Century Conference for Peace held in Chicago in late May. Placed on the conference program along with such figures as Thomas Mann, Harris Wofford, W.E.B. DuBois, and (interestingly) Cliff Durr, Stover was surprisingly bumped at the last minute. He blamed the decision on Talbott, whom he accused of "red baiting" him off the program out of jealousy. Talbott, Stover wrote Elizabeth Moos,

²¹F.W. Stover to Cedric Belfrage, November 22, 1949, Stover Papers; F.W. Stover to Harold Ridenour, September 30, 1949, Stover Papers.

had "suddenly found out at [the National Farmers Union convention in March, 1950, in Denver] that the peace issue was popular." Since he had "usually tried to pose as the outstanding 'progressive' in the Farmers Union," Talbott could not tolerate another Farmers Union figure assuming anything near that role. He, therefore, Stover charged, had contacted the conference organizers and had suggested that Stover's active involvement in Henry Wallace's Progressive Party and in other left-leaning political organizations would create a black mark, in the public's eye, for the conference.²² Talbott's action, Stover later wrote Archie Wright, forced his blood "near the boiling point." "What I think of this guy is not fit to print," Stover told Wright. "I know," he continued:

of no creature in the animal kingdom that I would want to compare him with, because I am sure it wouldn't be fair to the creature. We will settle that score some day and it will be settled before a large Farmers Union group after this opportunist has just finished one of his "spread-eagled, star-spangled" speeches.²³

Despite his anger at individual Farmers Union figures and his disappointment with the paths taken by state affiliates such as Minnesota and Montana, Fred Stover remained surprisingly optimistic that the

²²F.W. Stover to Mrs. Jessie M. Street, May 12, 1950, Stover Papers; Program of the Mid-Century Conference for Peace, May 29-30, 1950, Stover Papers; F.W. Stover to Mrs. Elizabeth Moos, June 2, 1950, Stover Papers.

²³F.W. Stover to Archie Wright, June 13, 1950, Stover Papers; F.W. Stover to Archie Wright, June 3, 1950, Stover Papers.

membership of the Farmers Union would be able to keep the organization from shifting into open support of Truman's foreign policy. The Union, he told Cedric Belfrage, "has done too good an educational job and has too many well informed people in it to be taken on a sharp swing to the 'right,' or to be made a 'front' for the Truman administration." Patton, Talbott, and others of like mind, Stover wrote Archie Wright, would probably try to "water down our foreign policy position by ambiguous language and double-talk" in an attempt to curry political favors, but they "wouldn't dare" come out publicly for a total reversal of "our good position on foreign policy." Stover and Wright even held out hope that Jim Patton possibly could be "saved" and suggested that one way to begin the process would be to convince him to represent the Farmers Union at the World Peace Congress in Milan, Italy, in October, 1950.²⁴

The optimism ended in the first week of June, 1950, when Stover read Patton's report on the economic state of western Europe. Written as a follow-up to his participation in the Economic Cooperation Administration's survey of the impact of the Marshall Plan, the National Farmers Union president's assessment was in some respects critical of American policy.

²⁴F.W. Stover to Cedric Belfrage, November 22, 1949, Stover Papers; F.W. Stover to Archie Wright, December 21, 1949, Stover Papers; F.W. Stover to Archie Wright, May 2, 1950, Stover Papers; Archie Wright to Fred Stover, May 22, 1950, Stover Papers.

However, in listing the elements that he believed had contributed to Europe's economic difficulties, Patton included, in Stover's words, "the gigantic losses by the Western European countries of their colonies." The suggestion that "social and economic decay is the result of ending imperialism" was the kind of "distorted thinking," Stover wrote, to be expected from Truman, but not from "a man with Jim Patton's background, training, and broad knowledge." Patton's betrayal of Farmers Union principle alarmed Stover and led him to believe that the organization would "become hereafter but a supine adjunct to the military machine."²⁵

Jim Patton was still in Europe when the fighting began in Korea and so did not issue an immediate statement either in support of or in opposition to President Truman's decision to go to war. That time lag allowed both Fred Stover and Archie Wright to harbor one last optimistic hope that the Farmers Union would continue its role as Cold War critic by denouncing America's action. Telling Stover that "all is not yet lost by any means," Wright encouraged his friend to write a letter to Patton urging him to oppose the war. It could be waiting for him, along with Wright's "two cents worth," when he arrived back in the states. Both men knew, however, that they faced long odds. The fact that Patton's "brain trust," including Glenn

²⁵F.W. Stover to Archie Wright, June 30, 1950, Stover Papers; F.W. Stover to Archie Wright, August 30, 1950, Stover Papers.

Talbott, had joined him for the last leg of his European trip seemed to preclude the possibility of Patton coming out against the war. Accepting what was by now increasingly obvious, Stover wrote Wright that, "I suppose when they get back in the next few days from their trip they will probably issue a statement telling the world how loyal they are to the Korean war and completely upholding the President's stand. . . ."26

The prediction was right on target. Arriving in the states in mid-July, Patton quickly met with Truman to assure him that the Farmers Union supported the President in his efforts in Korea. On the same day that he met with Truman, Patton forwarded a letter to Tom Connally, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The letter, which began with the cry that "the flag of the United Nations is waving in Korea," called on Connally to support passage of H.J.R. 334, a bill designed to raise the ceilings on U.S. contributions to non-military agencies of the United Nations. America's military action in Korea, Patton argued in the letter, would be "far more impressive" if supplemented by increased support for the non-military, technical assistance agencies of the U.N., particularly, from a farmer's point of view, the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization.²⁷

²⁶Archie Wright to Fred Stover, July 1, 1950, Stover Papers; F.W. Stover to Archie Wright, June 30, 1950, Stover Papers.

²⁷Undated inter-office communication of the National Farmers Union,

One week after meeting with President Truman, Jim Patton conferred with the Executive Committee of the National Farmers Union in Tacoma, Washington. The July 24-26 conference, attended by Patton, Glenn Talbott, National Farmers Union vice president Herb Rolph, Montana president Don Chapman, Oregon president Ronald Jones, and Rocky Mountain president Harvey Solberg, spent "several hours" discussing the Korean conflict. As they had in his letter to Senator Connally, Patton's remarks to his fellow Farmers Union leaders emphasized the role of the United Nations. He admitted that the U.N. action in Korea was perhaps not "all that might be desired," but he nevertheless approved of the fact that "for the first time in the history of the world, we are at war under the flag of the Federation of National States - the United Nations." That reality convinced Patton that the Farmers Union had no choice but to "support the Government of the United States in the attempt to put down the aggression in Korea." Despite the rhetoric in support of U.N. action, Patton's report to the committee ended with a statement clearly revealing the agenda closest to his heart - the survival of the Farmers Union as a viable political force. "I believe, " he

summarizing the July 18, 1950, meeting between Jim Patton and President Truman, Box 10, File Folder *9, Patton Papers; James G. Patton to Tom Connally, July 18, 1950, Box 1867, Record Group 16 (General Correspondence); Press release, "Strengthening the United Nations Non-Military Agencies," July 18, 1950, Stover Papers.

concluded:

that the primary function of the Farmers Union and its officials is to preserve that Union. And I am sure if our Union is to be preserved and looked upon and heard as a responsible organization in the United States, it is absolutely necessary for us to support the United Nations and to support our Government which is now at war.²⁸

After receiving consensus support from the Executive Committee, Jim Patton issued a statement to the organization's membership announcing the "Farmers Union position in the present crisis in Asia." The eight-paragraph statement opened with the argument that the United States was "involved in a war not of its choice or making," went on to remind Farmers Union members that the organization had "openly criticized" U.S. foreign policy in the past, but concluded that the "evil" actions of the Soviet Union in "fomenting armed aggression" in Korea had created the necessity for United States and United Nations action.²⁹

Six weeks after issuing the statement, Jim Patton asked for ratification from the entire Board of Directors of the Farmers Union. In a three-day

²⁸"Minutes of the Executive Committee of the National Farmers Union," July 25, 1950, and "Report of James G. Patton, President, National Farmers Union, to the Executive Committee," July 24-26, 1950, both in the Stover Papers.

²⁹The July 29, 1950, statement is included in "Policy Statement of James G. Patton, President, National Farmers Union," September 8, 1950, Series V, Box 4, Book 1 ("Exhibit File: NFU Convention, 1952 Biennial Convention, Dallas, Texas, March 10-14"), National Farmers Union Papers. A copy will also be found in Box 124, Folder 1, Wisconsin Farmers Union Papers.

meeting in Denver in September, Patton once more spoke of the organization's history of dissent and acknowledged that the government of South Korea "was by no means as true a popular government as could be desired." He also admitted that "the vote of the United Nations Security Council for United Nations participation in the Korean War might have been had under more favorable circumstances," and that "there were innumerable border incidents and provocations on both sides before the North Koreans launched their attack." These admissions aside, Patton claimed, "the fact remains that South Korea was invaded and that the United Nations clearly has stamped that action as an aggressive action and one to be resisted by member nations."³⁰

The discussion over approval of Patton's request for organizational support was fairly one-sided. Fred Stover, who as a state president was a member of the Board of Directors, spoke out in opposition, but his was the single such voice. Archie Wright, who surely would have stood by Stover in opposition, had for health reasons been unable to make it to Denver.³¹ Other figures who might have voiced dissent similarly missed the meeting,

³⁰"Policy Statement of James G. Patton," September 8, 1950.

³¹Alfred Kuchler to Fred Stover, September 11, 1950, and F.W. Stover to Archie Wright and Al Kuchler, September 14, 1950, both in the Stover Papers.

as did, in fact, some state presidents, particularly Wisconsin's Kenneth Hones, who would have applauded Patton's stand against the "evil" Russians. The meeting was dominated by Patton and Glenn Talbott and by the voices that through purge and political persuasion had risen to the top of the Farmers Union affiliates in their respective states.

The increasingly "un-progressive" nature of the Farmers Union leadership was not, however, the leading reason why the Board of Directors voted to support Patton's stand on Korea. Instead, the fact that the Denver meeting took place while Styles Bridges was simultaneously attacking the Farmers Union as a Communist-front organization on the floor of the U.S. Senate had a greater impact. Fearing that if left unchallenged the New Hampshire Republican's charges would damage the Farmers Union reputation, the Board of Directors responded with a resolution that, as Fred Stover accurately described it, used "Jim's position on Korea as proof that we were not communistic."³² The resolution, written somewhat hurriedly by Russell Smith, C.E. Huff, and newly appointed Director of Publications J. Lewis Henderson, described Bridges' attack as "a disservice to the cause of truth and decency," for:

As every honest observer knows, the Farmers Union is not Communistic and is not a Communist-front organization. Farmers

³²F.W. Stover to Archie Wright and Al Kuchler, September 14, 1950, Stover Papers.

Union officials on many occasions have denounced Communism as well as other forms of totalitarianism. For example, on July 29, an official statement of the President, approved by the Executive Committee, charged the North Korean aggressors had been 'trained and agitated into waging war on South Korea by Russia.'³³

The desire of Farmers Union officials to run from the charges of Communist affiliation was reinforced in a meeting of the organization's educational leaders held concurrently with the Board of Directors gathering in Denver. Chaired by Glenn Talbott's sister, Gladys Talbott Edwards, the group of state representatives and Education Department staff discussed the State Department's claim that peace petitions being circulated in the United States were sponsored by the Soviets and suggested that Farmers Union members therefore avoid suspicion by refusing to be affiliated with or to sign any such documents.³⁴

The beginning of the Korean War combined with Styles Bridges' attack on the Farmers Union created an opportunity for a public affirmation of the changing nature of organization policy. Seizing the moment, Jim Patton and other figures for whom preservation of the Farmers Union reigned as the number one priority emerged from the closet and adopted as their own the popular language of the Cold War. Where once the organization had

³³Resolution of Board of Directors of National Farmers Union, September 9, 1950, Eastern Union Farmer, November, 1950, p. 2.

³⁴Minutes of Leaders Meeting, September 7, 1950, Denver, Colorado, Stover Papers.

condemned U.S. imperialism and the profit-oriented mentality of America's "corporate totalitarianism," it now joined President Truman in placing the blame for the world's postwar ills solely on the shoulders of the Soviet Union.

A September 21, 1950, letter from Jim Patton to Stuart Symington illustrated how far the Farmers Union president had shifted in his views. After complimenting Symington for his work in running President Truman's Committee on Mobilization Policy, the same Jim Patton who in 1946 had vigorously protested the need for an annual defense budget of eighteen billion dollars wrote that:

My own personal opinion is that we should spend \$50 billion a year for the next three years on the defense effort just on the basis that we are going to present a stronger armed position. If we must get ready for a major war with Russia then I think we should do our planning on the basis of spending half of our national income for that effort, or somewhere in the neighborhood of \$150 billion a year.³⁵

It would be unfair to brand Jim Patton as an individual who had completely sold out, for he occasionally expressed second thoughts about a blanket endorsement of U.S. policy. Writing to Department of Agriculture official John Baker in August, 1950, Patton noted his "100 percent" support

³⁵Jim Patton to Stuart Symington, September 21, 1950, Box 7, File Folder 9, Patton Papers. Patton, by the way, had a month earlier accepted a position on Symington's mobilization committee. For details of Patton's 1946 rejection of an eighteen billion dollar defense budget, see Chapter 2, pp. 52-3.

of Truman's actions in Korea, but he also argued that the United States had to end "this silly business of always kowtowing" to undemocratic forces in foreign lands. Patton concluded his apparent reference to Syngman Rhee with the hopeful observation that American policymakers could find "fresh new leaders and people who have some concern for the rank and file." Writing to Chester Bowles two years later, Patton once again criticized U.S. policy in his lament that America's "over-emphasis on militarism is shocking."³⁶

Such sentiments, however, were few and far between. More typical of Jim Patton in the years of the Korean War were statements echoing American policy. Addressing the South Dakota Farmers Union on October 5, 1950, Patton followed the administration line in his claim that U.S. policy needed to be based on the realization "that aggression anywhere in this closely knit world is an eventual threat to our security at home." Writing once again to Stuart Symington in late January, 1951, Patton seemed even to go beyond the administration in his claim that more forceful steps needed to be taken beyond the inadequate approach of "modified containment."³⁷

³⁶Jim Patton to John Baker, August 1, 1950, Box 5, File Folder 14, and Jim Patton to Chester Bowles, April 1, 1952, Box 5, File Folder 21, both in the Patton Papers. Incidentally, John Baker left the Agriculture Department and joined the Farmers Union as legislative secretary in May, 1951.

³⁷James G. Patton, "Address to South Dakota Farmers Union Convention,

In his commentaries on the war, Glenn Talbott often followed Jim Patton's lead in supporting administration policy; his words, in fact, were frequently identical to those used by Patton. Addressing his own North Dakota Farmers Union in November, 1950, Talbott reiterated Patton's criticism of the non-democratic nature of South Korea's government but repeated the claim that the Farmers Union had "no sound or logical choice but to support the United Nations. . . ."³⁸

At the same time, and despite Fred Stover's claims that Glenn Talbott was the ringleader of the Farmers Union's anti-progressive element, the North Dakota president exhibited a commendable level of moderation and understanding. This was particularly evident in his 1951 annual report in which he charged that "the assumptions upon which many of [America's] actions have been taken have not been adequately supported by facts." Sounding remarkably like Stringfellow Barr, Talbott argued that poverty, not Communism, was the real problem in the world, and that the United States, by assuming that the world's trouble spots had been created by Communist

October 5, 1950," Box 24, File Folder 6, and Jim Patton to Stuart Symington, January 22, 1951, Box 7, File Folder 26, both in the Patton Papers.

³⁸Glenn Talbott, Annual Report to the North Dakota Farmers Union, November 15, 1950, Box 1, Folder "1950," North Dakota Farmers Union Papers. Copy is also available in Folder #555 of President Truman's Official Files.

aggression, had credited the Communists "with a great deal more strength, intelligence and resourcefulness than they are entitled to. . . ." The report also argued that an annual defense budget of between sixty and eighty billion dollars "within the framework of our present assumption of what the problem is" could be reduced to between twenty and forty billion dollars if policymakers could be convinced of the true nature of the world crisis.³⁹

Talbott was especially angered by the American refusal to offer diplomatic recognition or to push for the United Nations seating of Communist China. He had wisely pointed out, in his annual address of 1950, that diplomatic recognition had nothing to do with agreement or disagreement "on questions of philosophy, ideology, the type or kind of government, or the [nation's] social or economic programs. . . ." Recognition meant merely, Talbott argued, "that each government recognizes that the other government is in power. . . ." If the United States had extended such recognition to Communist China in 1949, Talbott suggested, the nation could have avoided what turned out to be the eventual clash of Chinese and American troops in Korea. By following instead a policy of "particular exclusion," the United States and the United Nations had reneged on the promise of providing "a world wide sounding-board and a vehicle for settling

³⁹Glenn Talbott, Annual Report to the North Dakota Farmers Union, November 7, 1951, Box 1, Folder "1951," North Dakota Farmers Union Papers.

disputes and differences between countries." They had also contributed to the development of the United Nations as "nothing more than a regional military alliance."⁴⁰

Despite his occasional vocal opposition to American foreign policy, the enigmatic Talbott more often than not supported the new, pro-administration direction of the National Farmers Union. Having backed Patton both in his initial support of Korea and in his September, 1950, statement to the organization's membership, Talbott once again stood behind the Farmers Union president when in the summer and early fall of 1951 Patton offered to the Executive Committee and to the Board of Directors the Farmers Union's most strongly worded support of Truman's policies to date. Entitled "A Resolution on Building Strength for Peace, Prosperity, and Democracy," the July, 1951, resolution opened with the observation that:

There are today two major threats to true world brotherhood and peace. One is the existence in the free world of uncorrected and indefensible evils which provide the seedbed for agitation, uprising and revolt. The other is the fact that Russian rulers, instead of cooperating to end these conditions under free governments, have revealed imperialistic world aims and a determination to exploit every wrong for her own imperialistic purposes.⁴¹

⁴⁰Glenn Talbott, Annual Reports to the North Dakota Farmers Union, November 15, 1950, and November 7, 1951, Box 1, Folders "1950" and "1951," North Dakota Farmers Union Papers.

⁴¹"Resolution on Building Strength for Peace, Prosperity, and

Adopted by the Executive Committee and, over the opposition of Fred Stover and Alvin Christman, by the Board of Directors, the resolution cited the Soviets for failing to work with other nations toward peace, with establishing "totalitarian regimes in satellite countries," with engaging in "subversion and destruction," and with sponsoring "armed revolts and military aggressions." Charging that immediate Soviet intentions, particularly in Korea, were uncertain, the resolution offered three possible scenarios for the administration to consider in its planning for the future: (1) no cease-fire in Korea, or a cease-fire in Korea but outbreaks elsewhere; (2) a cease-fire in Korea but no early general peace settlement in Korea, or a Korean peace settlement accompanied by saber rattling elsewhere; and (3) an early Korean peace settlement accompanied by concrete Russian peace moves. Calling the third option "improbable," the Union acknowledged its belief that the Soviets would cause trouble somewhere in the world and suggested that to prepare for the eventuality the United States begin a rapid buildup of its economic, military, and political strength.⁴²

Democracy," Adopted by Executive Committee of National Farmers Union, July 27, 1951, contained in the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, July 26-27, 1951, Denver, Series I, Box 4, National Farmers Union Papers. A copy can also be found in Box 17 (General File), Folder "National Farmers Union-General," Waters Papers.

⁴²"Resolution on Building Strength for Peace, Prosperity, and Democracy." For voting on the resolution, see Minutes of the Regular

The apocalyptic tone, structured format, and concluding recommendations of "A Resolution on Building Strength for Peace, Prosperity, and Democracy" bore an uncanny resemblance to NSC-68, the Truman administration's April, 1950, in-house, secret re-evaluation of its foreign policy agenda. Combined with Patton's NSC-68-like recommendation to Stuart Symington that the nation's defense budget be hiked to \$50 billion, the resolution strongly suggests that Jim Patton's conversion to Truman's Cold War policies had made him such a key player in the administration that he actually had first-hand knowledge of the secret document.

Patton's increasingly visible role in and support of President Truman's administration generated a great deal of organizational criticism. Fred Stover and Archie Wright naturally protested, just as they had when the organizational rift had been more private than public. With Patton now openly espousing Truman administration policy, Stover in particular offered for public consumption what previously had been only a privately expressed negative critique of Patton.

Stover's December, 1950, special report to Iowa Union Farmer readers

Meeting of the Board of Directors, September 11, 1951, Washington, D.C., and Report of James G. Patton to the Board of Directors, September 11, 1951, Washington, D.C., both in Series I, Box 4 of the National Farmers Union Papers.

entitled "The Debacle in Korea" contained the charge that Patton had come out in support of the war "to prove that he was not a Communist." One month later, in an editorial critical of "jingoistic flag waving," Stover refrained from naming Patton directly but clearly included him in the list of "pusillanimous leaders who scrambled for a seat on the war machine . . . and volunteered as pied pipers of the war mobilizers." Citing the words of Samuel Johnson, Stover wrote that the actions of men like Patton helped him to understand what the eighteenth century English writer had meant when he claimed that, "Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel." Addressing the Montana Progressive Party's state convention in April, 1951, Stover once again indirectly indicted Patton as one of the "otherwise intelligent, but politically anemic, people" who "fold up when the going gets tough [and] forget about the resolutions of the past which they wrote or voted for opposing the 'extension of corporate monopolies into the markets of the world under the protection of a world-wide American military force.'"⁴³ Considering their long-standing differences of opinion, it was not surprising that Jim Patton and Fred Stover publicly parted company with

⁴³Iowa Union Farmer, December, 1950, p. 4, and January, 1951, p. 2; Speech delivered by Fred W. Stover, president of the Iowa Farmers Union, at the Montana Progressive Party's state convention at Great Falls, Montana, on April 8th, 1951, Box 6, Folder "FW Stover Speeches, 1948-1953," U.S. Farmers Association Records.

the beginning of the Korean War. Jim Patton had to have known - and expected - that his support for Truman would create a public rift with his old friend.

What Patton perhaps had not expected was the huge outpouring of opposition from rank-and-file members of the Union. He heard, either directly or indirectly, from a host of Farmers Union members who felt, as South Dakota's Mrs. Reynold Locken put it, that Patton was "succumbing to reaction." Searching for an explanation for Patton's about-face, these critics unanimously pointed to his participation in the E.C.E.'s tour of Marshall Plan recipient nations. The image of the Farmers Union president travelling through Europe, side by side with hated Farm Bureau president Allan Kline, on a government-sponsored junket, was too much for Farmers Union members to stomach. It gave, as a Minnesota group of rank-and-file members noted, "the rotten Plan the apparent approval of the Farmers Union." "Free trips may be fun for Patton," the group argued, but they did not justify organizational support for an American policy of "propping up reactionary governments in Europe." Patton's willingness, as the Progressive Party's C.B. Baldwin told him, to collaborate "with the Administration in accepting appointments to the various advisory bodies charged with carrying out the policy [he was] on record as opposing,"

cancelled out his "pious statements" against Truman's foreign policy. A long-time friend, Baldwin was particularly hurt by Patton's decisions and told him that he "hope[d] for a change because . . . I know that deep in your mind and heart you know you are wrong."⁴⁴

His friend's admonitions aside, Jim Patton refused to admit that he was wrong. He argued instead that in supporting American involvement in Korea he was in fact maintaining the Farmers Union's tradition of support for the United Nations. Since American action in Korea had been taken as part of an overall U.N. effort toward peace, and since support for the U.N. had been a cornerstone of Farmers Union policy, Patton rejected the charge that

⁴⁴Mrs. Reynold Locken to James G. Patton, September 30, 1950, in the Farmers Union Defense Committee pamphlet Which Shall It Be For the Farmers Union? Democracy From the Rank and File or Dictatorship From the Top Down (Des Moines, no date), pp. 17-19, Box 3, Folder 4, U.S. Farmers Association Records; Minnesota Rank and File Committee, "The Truth About Jim Patton," Box 22, Folder #2 of "Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers undated, 1950," Benson Papers; C.B. Baldwin to James Patton, March 22, 1951, Box 23, Folder "Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers March-April 1951," Benson Papers (copy also in Box 6, Folder "National Farmers Union 1951-1952," C.B. Baldwin Papers, University of Iowa.) Other examples of Farmers Union members blaming Patton's turn around on his participation in the E.C.E. tour include: a Scott County (Iowa) resolution cited in Iowa Union Farmer, November, 1950, p. 1; a letter to the editor from Leo Ars of Erwina, Pennsylvania, Iowa Union Farmer, November, 1950, pp. 6-7; and letters to the editor from Solon C. Phillips of Reading, Pennsylvania, and Hy Litwen of Lakewood, New Jersey, in the Eastern Union Farmer, October, 1950, pp. 2 and 5. The last two letters also criticized Patton for sponsoring Lucius Clay's "Freedom Crusade," a group whose chief accomplishment, according to Phillips, was "the restoration of Nazis to power in Western Germany."

defense of U.S. involvement in Korea signalled what one group of organization critics referred to as the Union's "contamina[ti]on] with reaction." Such charges were dismissed by both Patton and Glenn Talbott as either unfounded, misinterpreted, or misinformed.⁴⁵

What stands out most clearly in their responses to organizational criticism is that both Jim Patton and Glenn Talbott had succumbed to the paranoid tone of the times. They rejected out of hand the suggestions of Fred Stover and others that U.N. action in Korea could have resulted from South Korean wrongdoing or that the supposedly international response to the fighting was little more than American unilateralism in disguise. Such doubts and questionings, which in the past had characterized Farmers Union thinking, were replaced by a conciliatory submission to Truman administration policy. Even more revealing than this act of acquiescence was the vindictive tone taken by Patton and Talbott in responding to their critics. Adopting the language of the Red Scare, the two Farmers Union figures charged their critics with "peddling lies, innuendoes, and half-

⁴⁵"Statement of Principles, Farmers Union National Rank and File Committee," no date, Box 53, Folder 6, Wisconsin Farmers Union Papers; Bob Dugan (editor, North Dakota Union Farmer) to Francis Holte, February 14, 1951, Box 9, Folder 14, Talbott Family Papers; Bob Dugan to Ernest Sylte, February 14, 1951, Box 9, Folder 15, Talbott Family Papers; Glenn J. Talbott, "A Re-Declaration of Principles," no date, Box 10, Folder 7, Talbott Family Papers.

truths." But in defending their support of the Korean War, they themselves were guilty of twisting the truth, erroneously accusing their critics of "trying to prove that Russia and her satellites have all the answers and can do no wrong."⁴⁶

The most glaring example of this misrepresentation of fact was Jim Patton's response to a February, 1951, letter from a Minnesota Farmers Union member whose situation contained in a nutshell the frustrations of young American farmers. Facing an impending draft, Ed Smogard, Jr. told Patton that "the young farmers of America, such as myself, are being marched off to fight for colonialism and landlordism abroad only to leave our farms to be grabbed off eventually by big landlords here at home." Wondering what his membership in the Farmers Union had earned him, Smogard wrote that Patton had "betrayed the Farmers Union program and the Farmers Union members by attempting to force a decrepit Truman foreign policy upon them unwillingly." Suggesting that Patton was "maneuvering for a place in the sun," Smogard charged that the Farmers Union president had "been duped and mislead" and had become as a result "a bona-fide member in the house of Truman's prostitutes."⁴⁷

⁴⁶James Patton to Oscar Hersford, March 28, 1952, Box 10, Folder 5, Talbott Family Papers.

⁴⁷Ed Smogard, Jr. to James G. Patton, February 14, 1951, Box 10, Folder 3, Talbott Family Papers.

Despite the volatile tone of the letter, what Ed Smogard did not do was defend the Soviet Union. He specifically wrote of "the unholy intervention [in Korea] of foreign aggressors, one bearing a United Nations flag the other spirited by the hammer and sickle." In his reply, however, Patton unfairly and inaccurately accused Smogard of coming "to the conclusion that the United States can do no good and that Russia can do no wrong." He was, he told the Minnesota farmer, "just as sick and tired of war as anyone else," but he was "not going to be so dishonest as to put forth the prattle and tripe that Russia's hands are lily white and that the people of the United States and their Government are always wrong." Patton's response, which Ed Smogard later accurately described as "veiled red baiting" and as "McCarthyism . . . in a clever form," was, Smogard astutely noted, no answer to serious questions on foreign policy.⁴⁸

The truth was that with the coming of the Korean War the national leadership of the Farmers Union became incapable of seriously analyzing American foreign policy. Striving to avoid extinction as an influential voice in determining the nation's direction, the National Farmers Union yielded to the pressures of conformity and joined in lock step with the Cold War

⁴⁸James G. Patton to Ed Smogard, Jr., February 22, 1951, and Ed Smogard, Jr. to James Patton, March 9, 1951, Box 10, Folder 3, Talbott Family Papers.

mentality of the age. Just as Dean Acheson once remarked that Korea saved the Truman administration's plans for increased military budgets, so too did the conflict provide the national leadership of the Farmers Union with a reason to publicly reverse its long-standing position as the nation's leading agrarian critic of U.S. foreign policy. Acting on the desire to survive, Jim Patton and other organizational figures orchestrated a reversal of organizational tradition and saved, for the moment at least, the political clout of the Farmers Union.

Chapter Eight Purging the Heretics

In a 1954 statement entitled "Let the Truth Prevail," Fred Stover wrote that, "To be smeared and red-baited by reckless unsupported charges from outside the organization . . . is today quite natural." "But," he argued, "it is not natural that some of the leadership of our National organization . . . should join in the attack, and by their action give credence to the wild charges, with its slanderous imputations."¹ Yet, natural or not, from the beginning of the Korean War through its immediate aftermath in the mid-1950's, the National Farmers Union experienced just such a conflict. What once had been merely privately expressed differences of organizational opinion that occasionally surfaced for public viewing became, with the beginning of Korea, a war itself, one waged prominently in the public eye. Relying on innumerable "reckless," "wild," and frequently contrived charges, the national leadership attempted to purge from the organization those individuals and affiliates who, by refusing to support President Truman's Cold War policies, brought negative publicity to the National Farmers Union.

¹"Let the Truth Prevail," Statement by Fred W. Stover, President, Iowa Farmers Union, [1954], Stover Papers.

The most contrived, but also most frequently used, charge was that a number of state and regional organizations had declining memberships that made it impractical for the Farmers Union any longer to carry them as affiliates. Jim Patton expressed concern at the end of 1949 that memberships in both Michigan and Iowa would need "some attention" in the coming year, but he optimistically reported to Wisconsin's Ken Hones in September, 1950, that all state presidents except those in "Oregon and one other small state reported . . . rather substantial membership increases."² This awkward summary of events was complicated by Patton's highlighting of Michigan and Iowa as the two states in trouble in 1949, since both state organizations experienced membership growth between 1948 and 1950.

The truth, however, was that in the two years preceding Korea, Farmers Union membership trends varied significantly from state to state. From 1948 to 1949, six of the eighteen state and regional affiliates lost membership, while between 1949 and 1950 that number increased to ten. Most of the losses were offset by gains in other affiliates, allowing the Farmers Union to maintain a consistent national membership throughout the

²Report of James G. Patton to Executive Committee, November 14-16, 1949, Series I, Box 4, National Farmers Union Papers; James G. Patton to K.W. Hones, September 21, 1950, Box 53, Folder 4, Wisconsin Farmers Union Papers.

period.³ What is most clear from the figures, however, is that claims of declining membership as a justification for the revoking of affiliate charters was a fraud. If it had been a legitimate concern, far more affiliates would have lost their charters.

The excuse of limited membership nevertheless was used successfully by the national organization in dealing with Alabama, Ohio, and the Northeastern Division. The first two had serious membership problems and by the time of the Korean War had less than 500 paid members each. The third group, Archie Wright's Northeastern Division, had sufficient membership, but its people were behind in their dues obligations to the national organization. Meeting in Denver in March, 1951, the Farmers Union Board of Directors, acting on the January, 1951, recommendation of the Executive Committee to revoke the charters of all affiliates having less than the constitutionally-mandated minimum of 1000 paid members, ended the ties between the national organization and these three groups.⁴

What was curious about the Farmers Union action was its timing. The

³1948-1949 Membership Lists, attached to Vice President H.D. Rolph's Report to the 1950 Convention, Series IV, Box 3, File Folder 8, National Farmers Union Papers; 1950 Membership List, attached to Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, March 10-15, 1951, Denver, Series I, Box 4, National Farmers Union Papers.

⁴Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, March 10-15, 1951, Denver, Series I, Box 4, National Farmers Union Papers.

Ohio organization for years had been below the 1000 minimum requirement, largely because of the strength of the Farm Bureau in its state; yet its membership status had been long condoned. Alabama, too, had been suffering membership decline for a number of years, primarily because the liberal philosophy of the Farmers Union did not match well the conservatism of the South. And the Northeastern Division had been beset, as Archie Wright explained in a letter that was read at the March, 1951, Board meeting, by a number of problems: the increasing influence of labor unions in the farm field, strong competition from both the Grange and the Farm Bureau, and the negative economic impact of the Korean War. "We have, in the past," Wright wrote "survived much more serious and stringent times. I have no doubt of our ability to survive now." Despite Wright's request for "sympathetic consideration" in maintaining affiliation with the Union, despite concern expressed by several Directors that charter revocation "would have a bad effect on membership building," and despite South Dakota President Paul Opsahl's suggestion to give Wright's group a four-month grace period to straighten out its dues situation, the Board nevertheless revoked all three charters.⁵

⁵Archie Wright to Tony DeChant, National Farmers Union Secretary-Treasurer, March 3, 1951, Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, March 10-15, 1951, Denver, Series I, Box 4, National Farmers Union Papers. In addition to the minutes, detailed information on this meeting will be found

It was clear to both Archie Wright and Alabama's Aubrey Williams why the Board had, at this time, chosen to enforce technical constitutional provisions that it had for years ignored. Although neither man had been as vocal as Iowa's Fred Stover in criticizing the national leadership's recent alignment with President Truman, Wright had spoken out in opposition to the Korean War and Williams had signed the Stockholm Peace Appeal that had been critiqued by the administration as Communist-inspired. Explaining the Board's decision to his membership, Wright wrote that:

The technical reason for revocation of our charter probably was not the real reason. While we had not been spectacular about it, we were for peace and, behind the scenes, we had objected vigorously to the national's cosy arrangement with the Truman administration and its quasi endorsement of the defense preparations and its growing anti-communism, all fatal to any people's organization in the long run. I feel that the national officers thought that a charter revocation in our case would free them from Truman criticism . . .⁶

Williams was more conciliatory, reporting to Alabama members his doubts in the Iowa Union Farmer, March, 1951, p. 1.

⁶Archie Wright to Ulster Local, April 3, 1951, Box 3, Folder "Ulster County Miscellaneous Correspondence 1941-1953," New York Milk Shed Records. Interestingly, after asking the Farmers Union for "sympathetic consideration" in his March 3, 1951 letter, Wright five days later, in a second letter that was also read to the Board, rescinded that request and accepted the impending charter revocation. In that second letter, Wright lashed out at Jim Patton's "tacit endorsement of the Truman administration" and his poor treatment of Aubrey Williams and Ohio's Charley Few. Perhaps, after what he termed "mature reflection of the matter," Wright realized the futility of seeking conciliation with the national office. (Archie Wright to James G. Patton, March 8, 1951, Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, March 10-15, 1951, Denver, Series I, Box 4, National Farmers Union Papers.)

that the charter revocations were completely motivated by Jim Patton's anti-peace group sentiment. Nevertheless, he recognized that they would be, with some degree of accuracy, interpreted that way and would contribute to the "hysteria the country has found itself in."⁷

The removal of Wright and Williams was but a sideshow to the national organization's primary objective. Having struggled with the persistent criticisms of Fred Stover, the national leadership turned its attention to Iowa and resolved to banish from the National Farmers Union the most vocal critic of the Union's recent conversion to Truman's Cold War policies. Since membership in the Iowa Farmers Union was significantly above the required minimum of 1,000, the task involved a more complex attack plan than that used against Ohio, Alabama, and the Northeastern Division. But Jim Patton, Glenn Talbott, and other leading national figures concluded that the silencing of Stover would be well worth the effort. No longer would they be compelled to explain to the American public the activities of the man C.E. Huff described as "a tool of . . . the Reds," and who was therefore not only an embarrassment to the organization but also, as Huff put it in language suitable to the exaggerated rhetoric of the times, a threat "to decent social

⁷Summary of Alabama Farmers Union Meeting, April 12, 1951, Montgomery, Box 33 (Personal Files 1945-1958), Folder "Alabama Farmers Union Meeting 4/12/51," Williams Papers.

and economic order.”⁸

The attempt to unseat Fred Stover began in September, 1950, when the Iowa Farmers Union held its annual convention in Des Moines. Writing to Stover that he was unable to attend or to address the convention, Jim Patton forwarded instead a statement that he asked be read to the delegates.⁹ His comments, which he released to the press on September 22, focused exclusively on “the international situation” and repeated, word for word, both his July 29 statement and the Board of Director’s September 9 resolution supporting American involvement in Korea. He concluded his written remarks with what amounted to a direct threat to the Iowa

⁸C.E. Huff to Glenn Talbott, February 25, 1952, Box 9, Folder 44, Talbott Family Papers. The story behind the attempt to purge the Iowa Farmers Union is clouded by Jim Patton’s practice of selectively maintaining both Farmers Union and personal records. I immediately noticed significant chronological gaps in both the Patton Papers and the National Farmers Union Papers at the University of Colorado. Charles Livermore, who interviewed Patton in 1978 for the Columbia Oral History Project, also discovered the same phenomenon and wrote in the introduction to his study of Patton that, “official records are plentiful, but apparently ‘laundered.’” (Livermore, “James G. Patton,” p. ix.) When he asked Patton about it, the response was that the decision had been made to take minutes of meetings in such a fashion that the Farmers Union could not be sued; he also felt that the internal workings of the organization were no business of the newspapers. Such secretiveness reinforces the impression of a man quite concerned about the political side of things and for whom the title of “Twenty-First Century Visionary” seems inappropriate. (Charles Livermore, interview with Jim Patton, August, 1978, Box 2, pp. 93-94, Patton Papers.)

⁹James G. Patton to Fred W. Stover, September 19, 1950, Stover Papers.

organization. Noting his "sincere hope that the Iowa Farmers Union, in all of its actions, will give full support to the position of the National Farmers Union," Patton reminded the delegates that:

Our National Farmers Union is a federal organization. State Farmers Unions exist upon the grant of a charter under the National Constitution and by-laws. The power to revoke such state charters is held by the National Farmers Union, to be exercised in stated membership situations and in the case of intolerable departures from the democratically-adopted policies of a majority in convention.¹⁰

In addition to releasing the charter revocation threat to the general press, Patton also wrote a "Statement on Farmers Union Policy" to be published exclusively in the Des Moines Register. The Register, following Styles Bridges' attack on the Farmers Union, had defended the national organization in a September 9 editorial arguing that, "Because it is the voice of farm protest does not make the National Farmers Union a Communist 'front.'" Thanking the Register for this "splendid editorial," Patton on September 22, the second day of the Iowa convention, used the pages of the Des Moines newspaper to announce that he was "totally in disagreement with Fred Stover's present position on international policy" and that he felt "certain that the members of the Iowa Farmers Union, too, almost to a man, disagree with him." After carefully pointing out that he

¹⁰James G. Patton, "To the Delegates and Members of the Iowa Farmers Union in Convention at Des Moines, Iowa," September 19, 1950, Stover Papers.

did not believe that Stover was a Communist, Patton described the Iowa leader instead as a "sensitive Iowa farmer, embittered and enraged by the undeniable inequities and injustices which he has seen," but who was "honestly mistaken in his solutions on international affairs"¹¹

Despite Patton's cautious avoidance of the Communist issue and the seemingly sympathetic identification with Stover's intentions, his use of the Register as a vehicle for criticizing Stover "hit the convention," Homer Ayres wrote, "like a ton of bricks." Jim Patton surely realized that the Des Moines newspaper had for years been a constant critic of the Iowa organization. In fact, in the same September 9 editorial in which the Register defended the Farmers Union against Senator Bridges' charges, the paper had drawn a clear line between the national organization's role as the "voice of farm protest" and the state unit's "fellow-traveling, or just plain naivete." Stover's group, the Register had claimed, was "a tiny fringe of little consequence" that "quite often seemed to be following closely the Communist line"¹² Patton's decision to use the Register as a forum

¹¹Des Moines Register, September 9, 1950 and September 22, 1950. The original "Statement on Farmers Union Policy for the Des Moines Register by James G. Patton" is in Box 26, File Folder #6, Patton Papers.

¹²Iowa Union Farmer, October 21, 1950, p. 4; Des Moines Register, September 9, 1950. Details on the poor relationship between the Register and the Iowa Farmers Union are discussed in Fred Stover's August 11, 1950, letter "To the Directors." (Stover Papers)

struck many in Iowa as further evidence that the national president had given in to the anti-Communist hysteria of the times.

Although the opening salvo in the National Farmers Union's war on Iowa had used the threat of charter revocation against the entire organization, it was clear that what Patton and other national figures would have preferred was simply the removal of Fred Stover from a leadership position in the state. In his September 22 statement in the Register, Patton had spoken of his certainty that "almost to a man" the membership of the Iowa Farmers Union disagreed with Fred Stover. Two days after the Iowa convention, the Register added to the portrayal of Stover as the primary problem with a malicious front-page cartoon showing the Iowa leader dragging the Iowa Farmers Union unwillingly into the "Communist international line." The argument of the Register, and of Jim Patton, was that the Iowa organization could be saved if Fred Stover simply would agree to "step aside."¹³

Stover was unwilling to accommodate Patton's request and, considering his continued role as state president, it is clear that the Iowa membership did not view their leader as negatively as Patton supposed. A group of state members, however, did agree more with Patton than with Stover, and in the

¹³Des Moines Register, September 25, 1950, p.1. Jim Patton admitted in his 1978 interview with Charles Livermore that what the organization wanted was for "Fred to step aside." (Livermore interview, p. 96.)

months following the convention staged a national-assisted coup to oust Fred Stover. The leader of the movement was Leonard Hoffman, who until this point had served as Stover's vice president.



Immediately following the Iowa convention, Hoffman wrote Jim Patton asking his opinion on a legal question: Did holding an office in a national political organization prevent a Farmers Union member from holding office in the Union? The question came as a result of the Farmers Union's constitutionally-stated mandate for the organization to be "non-partisan" in nature. It was aimed specifically in this case at Fred Stover, who, as co-chairman of the national Progressive Party, had, in 1948, read the speech nominating Henry Wallace for U.S. President. Patton directed the question to

Washington, D.C., attorney Carl Berueffy, who returned the opinion that Stover had been required to resign as Iowa Farmers Union president before accepting the position in the Progressive Party. He was, therefore, no longer state president, but would have to relinquish the role to his vice president, Leonard Hoffman.¹⁴

The argument was clearly a contrived effort to eliminate Stover. That Berueffy's response was in Patton's hands less than a week after the end of the Iowa convention strongly suggests that Hoffman or Patton, or both, had concocted the scheme in advance. Patton's decision to consult Berueffy, someone unaffiliated with the Union, could be considered an extraordinary attempt at impartiality; it also, however, could be seen as an attempt to avoid the lengthy battle that might have ensued had Patton either consulted a host of "impartial" outsiders in the hope of bulwarking his case with numbers, or referred the question to the Farmers Union's Executive Committee, Board of Directors, or entire membership. By relying on the advice of one attorney, Patton got what he wanted - a quick solution to a sticky problem. He also managed to avoid any discussion of the facts that

¹⁴Report of James G. Patton to the Executive Committee, October 31, 1950, Denver, Series I, Box 4, National Farmers Union Papers; Carl Berueffy to James G. Patton, September 29, 1950, Series VII, Box 2, File Folder #5, National Farmers Union Papers.

Stover had by this time resigned his position in the Progressive Party or that he himself, having served as national vice president of the C.I.O. Political Action Committee, might have fallen victim to a ruling more widely debated. Patton's involvement with the C.I.O. organization had, in fact, brought allegations in 1944 that he was in violation of the Farmers Union's "non partisan" rules and had prompted an unsuccessful move to replace him as national president. Nevertheless, a ploy that Patton had opposed when used against him in 1944, he fully supported when used against Stover in 1950.¹⁵

Despite its contrived nature, Leonard Hoffman used Berueffy's decision for all it was worth. Noting the changing nature of the Progressive Party, including Henry Wallace's surprise support for the Korean War, Hoffman announced that the party now consisted of "a core of designing people, and a fringe of once fine people who are too naive to understand what is going on - or have deliberately decided to go along with Communist policies." Although Hoffman did not specify which category Fred Stover fit, his four-page "Report to the Iowa Farmers Union Members" released on November 20, 1950, included references to Stover's "activities in the pinko Progressive

¹⁵Chambers, "Relations," p. 30. See also Fred Stover's closing speech to the September, 1951, Iowa Farmers Union annual convention, Box 6, Folder "F.W. Stover Speeches 1948-1953," U.S. Farmers Association Records.

party" and to the Iowa Union Farmer's "slavish following of the Moscow line." It also contained the argument that Stover was officially out as Iowa president.¹⁶ This announcement, combined with a September, 1950, constitutional change in the structure of the state organization's Board of Directors, threw the Iowa Farmers Union into a chaotic struggle for power that eventually had to be resolved by the courts.¹⁷

Jim Patton insisted time and again that neither he nor any other national organization officials played a role in the struggle for control of Iowa. Patton in particular denied that he personally participated in any direct attacks on Fred Stover, either publicly or behind the scenes. Responding to Archie Wright's charge that he had "kicked Stover around," Patton retorted in March, 1951, that he had "not at any time attacked Stover in the National Union Farmer or otherwise." Writing to Glenn Talbott two months earlier, the Farmers Union president argued that he had "not participated in the Iowa situation" and that any statements he had made regarding it had been made "directly by a written message." When reminded that his charter revocation

¹⁶"A Statement to Iowa Farmers Union Members By Leonard E. Hoffman," October 7, 1950, Stover Papers.

¹⁷The constitutional battle over who legally comprised the Board of Directors is an issue too removed from my present purposes. Details are discussed in Rinehart, "The Iowa Farmers Union," and in a number of documents in the Stover Papers, including "A Statement to Iowa Farmers Union Members by Leonard E. Hoffman" and "An Open Letter to Leonard Hoffman by The Farmers Union Defense Committee."

address to the Iowa convention certainly seemed an intrusion into the affairs of the state, Patton announced that his actions had been "misinterpreted and exaggerated . . . to make them appear undemocratic." All he had done in the address, he wrote in a letter to Washington state's Ward King, was merely direct attention to the organization's constitution. "I did not feel then nor do I feel now," he told King, "that directing attention to the constitution is improper in a democracy." When Wisconsin's Ken Hones praised him for "the manner in which [he had] handled the Stover situation," but suggested that the charter revocation threat had not been wise, Patton answered that his language had not been intended as a threat to Iowa's charter.¹⁸

The image Jim Patton tried to convey was that the fight between Fred Stover and Leonard Hoffman was an internal matter in which the national organization would have no part and whose resolution would be left to the courts. "Action in Iowa," he reported to the Executive Committee at the end

¹⁸ Archie Wright to James G. Patton, March 8, 1951, Box 3, New York Milk Shed Records; James G. Patton to Archie Wright, March 19, 1951, Box 10, Folder 5, Talbott Family Papers; James G. Patton to Glenn Talbott, January 19, 1951, Box 10, Folder 3, Talbott Family Papers; James G. Patton to Ward King, quoted in the Oregon Farmer Union, January 15, 1951, p. 4; K.W. Hones to James G. Patton, September 29, 1950, Box 53, Folder 4, Wisconsin Farmers Union Papers; James G. Patton to Kenneth W. Hones, October 24, 1950, Box 53, Folder 4, Wisconsin Farmers Union Papers.

of October, 1950, was "being taken by local people." There admittedly were national organization figures occasionally in the state, but they were there merely "to check on the nature of the situation and report to me." When it was suggested that perhaps he should meet with Fred Stover to clear the air, Patton responded that he saw "no point in having a conference with Fred Stover or, for that matter, anyone else in Iowa until some decision is made in the courts."¹⁹

Try as he might to paint an image of ideological impartiality and physical non-interference, Patton could pull neither off. His statement to the Executive Committee that the fight in Iowa featured two factions, one "composed of supporters of National Farmers Union policy" and the other "behind Fred Stover," demonstrated a decided preference for the anti-Stover forces of Leonard Hoffman. Even more revealing was his comment to M.W. Thatcher that "the Commie crowd which keeps fluttering around Fred is merely trying to stir up trouble"²⁰

Patton's pronouncement that neither he nor any other National Farmers Union officials interfered in Iowa was as transparent as his claims of

¹⁹Report of James G. Patton to Executive Committee, October 31, 1950, Denver, Series I, Box 4, National Farmers Union Papers; James G. Patton to Glenn Talbott, January 19, 1951, Box 10, Folder 3, Talbott Family Papers.

²⁰Report of James G. Patton to Executive Committee, October 31, 1950, Denver, Series I, Box 4, National Farmers Union Papers; James G. Patton to M.W. Thatcher, January 2, 1951, Box 10, Folder 3, Talbott Family Papers.

ideological objectivity. In addition to the threat to revoke the state's charter, however weakly denied, Farmers Union officials visited Iowa on a number of occasions in more than a purely observational capacity. Refusing to meet with Stover, Farmers Union lobbyist Benton Stong nevertheless frequently visited with Leonard Hoffman and other anti-Stover forces, and Jim Patton himself met with Hoffman shortly after the Iowa convention. Far from forwarding all commentary about the Iowa situation directly to Fred Stover, as he claimed he had in January, 1951, Patton instead discussed the events at length, and in terms derogatory to the Iowa leader, in correspondence with Glenn Talbott, M.W. Thatcher, and Ken Hones. In fact, when at the end of 1950, Stover wrote Thatcher praising a recent speech, but criticizing other farm leaders for their lack of courage, Thatcher forwarded the letter to Patton, who in turn forwarded it to Talbott, with the note that it was "some interesting correspondence." Citing the praise that Stover had given Thatcher, Patton wrote Talbott that, "MWT can get mixed up in some of the strangest concoctions. Apparently he has not been very close in."²¹

²¹Fred Stover to M.W. Thatcher, December 22, 1950, M.W. Thatcher to Fred Stover, December 29, 1950, M.W. Thatcher to James G. Patton, December 29, 1950, James G. Patton to M.W. Thatcher, January 2, 1951, James G. Patton to Glenn Talbott, January 2, 1951, and James G. Patton to Glenn Talbott, undated handwritten note, all in Box 10, Folder 3, Talbott

Being "very close in" implied an awareness of events and a willingness to take steps to isolate Stover and his supporters. While Thatcher apparently had not been in the loop in late 1950, by October, 1951, he was much "closer in." The organization he headed, the Grain Terminal Association, distributed the Farmers Union's educational funds, and in that month it refused to disburse shares to the Iowa affiliate. Explaining the reasoning for the move, Thatcher wrote the Iowa leadership that, "the educational work now being carried on by the Iowa Farmers Union is not in the best interests of agriculture, and particularly of the Farmers Union programs." Four months later, prominent figures in the Farmers Union denied that the funds had ever been withheld. The denial struck Fred Stover as another attempt by the national leadership to unfairly and inaccurately "brand [him] as a trouble-maker and rumor-monger." The withholding of educational funds, Stover wrote to Montana Farmers Union member Peter Bokma, was "not a rumor," but was part of the national organization's effort "to compel conformity to the war program."²²

Jim Patton and Glenn Talbott attempted to further isolate Iowa by

Family Papers.

²²M.W. Thatcher to Edna Untiedt, October 10, 1951, quoted in "Is This the GTA Way?," Stover Papers; Peter Bokma to Fred Stover, February 1, 1952, and Fred Stover to Peter Bokma, February 9, 1952, both in the Stover Papers.

questioning the intent and origins of pro-Stover materials mailed to Union members. Sharing with the Union membership copies of "Whither the Farmers Union," a publication put out by a Farmers Union Rank and File Committee headquartered in Iowa, Patton suggested impropriety with his accompanying remark that "the mailings originated in New York City."²³ Talbott added to the suggestion of subversion when he wrote a Minnesota Farmers Union member that Stover materials:

being distributed out of New York with a New York postmark would seem to be some indication that forces outside the Farmers Union are doing what they believe will be effective in creating dissention [sic] and division within the ranks of the organization.²⁴

The implication was clear: Fred Stover was either a willing or unwilling tool of outside forces, meaning, of course, the Communist Party.

There can be no doubt, despite the denials, that the National Farmers Union played an active role in events in Iowa. The debatable point in all of this, however, has been whether Jim Patton and national figures initiated and orchestrated the anti-Stover coup, or whether, as one pro-Hoffman supporter later argued, the move began with Iowa's membership who eventually "had no recourse except to ask help from the National."²⁵

²³James G. Patton to "Dear Co-Workers," June 30, 1952, Box 10, Folder 7, Talbott Family Papers.

²⁴Glenn Talbott to F.F. Frater, February 26, 1952, Box 9, Folder 55, Talbott Family Papers.

²⁵Lee Fryer interview of Paul Schwitters, no date, Stover Papers.

Although Stover advocates persistently argued that the national leadership was completely behind the attempted purge, the truth seems to be that the effort was a joint venture, initiated neither exclusively by Patton nor totally by Hoffman's adherents. It was instead a combined effort, orchestrated by state and national figures together in the hope of ridding the organization of the embarrassing Fred Stover.

Despite this united effort, the purge attempt failed when in April, 1951, the Iowa courts ruled in favor of Fred Stover as the legitimate president of the Iowa Farmers Union. Almost simultaneously, Jim Patton wrote Ken Hones that the national Board of Directors would "have to take specific action in relation to Iowa"²⁶ The "specific action" Patton had in mind was the standby tactic of charter revocation. Having failed in the bid to isolate Stover from the Iowa Farmers Union, the national leadership now shifted strategies and sought to remove the Iowa affiliate completely from the national organization. The new strategy masked the same old goal - the elimination of Stover. Jim Patton and the national leadership had no intention of permanently banning Iowa from membership, but worked instead toward cancelling the charter of the Stover-led Iowa Farmers Union and,

²⁶James G. Patton to K.W. Hones, May 25, 1951, Box 53, Folder 5, Wisconsin Farmers Union Papers.

once he was out of the way, reviving the state group under more cooperative leadership. Dwight Anderson, who in 1948 had unsuccessfully challenged Stover for the Iowa presidency, put the objective in black and white in a July, 1951, letter to Patton in which he asked the national organization to "revoke or suspend the charter of the Iowa Farmers Union as soon as possible, and then come in and set up a new organization"²⁷

Working in tandem with a group of members primarily from Hardin County, the home of Leonard Hoffman, the national leadership used as a vehicle for charter revocation the charge that Stover systematically was denying organizational affiliation to local areas populated by anti-Stover elements and was establishing what amounted to dictatorial control over the state. In a lengthy September, 1951, letter to Glenn Talbott, Crystal Lake's Leo Paulson spoke of his increasing disappointment with Stover's leadership and of the Iowa president's unwillingness to listen to suggestions for change. Paulson wrote of numerous local affiliates whose memberships were rapidly declining and argued that Iowa could "never build an effective organization . . . under the present leadership." Iowa Falls member Paul Schwitters, in a February, 1952, letter to Patton, wrote of running into "many obstacles" in trying to organize local affiliates and

²⁷Dwight L. Anderson to James Patton, July 2, 1951, Box 9, Folder 31, Talbott Family Papers.

suggested that the Stover forces were deliberately "stalling" in an attempt to maintain control of the state.²⁸

The claims of dictatorial designs were as desperately contrived as the charges of unconstitutional political affiliations. Rejected by Stover supporters as a "cowardly attack" by a "Farm Bureau-minded, charter-lifting, pro-war . . . group," the charges were interpreted as nothing more than a continuation in the long line of "inuendoes and insinuations" that masqueraded for substantive fact. In truth, as Glenn Talbott admitted in responding to Leo Paulson's letter, neither the National Farmers Union nor its supporters in Iowa had any "sound, legal grounds for revocation or cancellation of the Iowa Farmers Union Charter."²⁹ The admission, however, did not stop the national leadership and the pro-Hoffman forces from pursuing the goal of somehow ridding the organization of Stover. As the Farmers Union's historical fiftieth anniversary convention approached in 1952, the organization's brains trust at last concocted what turned out to be a successful plan.

²⁸Leo Paulson to Glenn Talbott, September 5, 1951, Box 9, Folder 31, and Paul Schwitters to James G. Patton, February 4, 1952, Box 10, Folder 3, Talbott Family Papers.

²⁹"Cowardly Attack by 'Waterloo Group' Met By Members," undated pamphlet, Box 4, Folder 1, U.S. Farmers Association Records; Glenn J. Talbott to Leo Paulson, October 18, 1951, Box 9, Folder 31, Talbott Family Papers.

In a fitting tribute to its 1902 Texas roots, the Farmers Union's Golden Jubilee convention opened in Dallas on March 10, 1952. Intended as a positive celebration of fifty successful years, the gathering instead was embroiled immediately in divisive controversy. Even before its opening, the selection of Dallas had generated concerns from some delegates that a convention in a "Jim Crow" city would damage the liberal reputation of the Union. The Eastern Division was particularly critical of the Dallas location and passed a February, 1952, resolution urging a change in site to "uphold the traditional Farmers Union principle of equality for all."³⁰

The resolution irritated Jim Patton. Plans for the convention, he wrote Alabama's Aubrey Williams, had been in the works for two years, and, during that time, the choice of a southern city (Little Rock and Oklahoma City had been considered in addition to Dallas) had been opposed by no one, "including [Eastern Division president] Mr. Christman." In fact, experience with previous conventions in non-southern cities had demonstrated that racial discrimination was not exclusively a southern phenomenon. Farmers Union secretary-treasurer Tony Dechant suggested that members hoping for a changed convention site at such a late date were "a trifle naive," but Patton was more blunt. Christman and the Eastern Division, he wrote Williams,

³⁰"Farmers Union Members Shocked at Patton's Disclosure of 'Jim Crow' Convention Plans; Eastern Division Demands Shift of Site," undated press release, Stover Papers.

were part of the annoying element of the Union "who wish to cause trouble about anything on which they can stir up trouble."³¹

Jim Patton and Glenn Talbott arrived in Dallas determined to eliminate once and for all the annoying elements that Patton by now derisively described as the Union's "tadpoles."³² Working closely with C.E. Huff and other national figures, Patton and Talbott had designed a constitutional revision, accompanied by an elaborate rationale, that allowed the Farmers Union to revoke the charter of any affiliate whose membership fell below a now significantly inflated figure. Whereas a year earlier, Ohio, Alabama, and the Northeastern Division had fallen victim to the 1,000 member requirement, the 1952 proposal read:

The charter of any State Union may be revoked, with or without prior notice, by the majority vote of the Board of Directors of National Union (a) if at the end of its fiscal year in 1952 the dues paid membership of a State Union having charter on March 6, 1946, shall be less than 1,000; or (b) if at the end of its fiscal year in 1952 the dues paid membership of a State Union whose charter has been issued subsequent to March 6, 1946, shall be less than 2,500; or (c) if at the

³¹Aubrey Williams to James G. Patton, February 14, 1952, Tony T. Dechant to James G. Patton, February 15, 1952, and James G. Patton to Aubrey Williams, February 18, 1952, Box 32, Williams Papers.

³²In a March 28, 1952, letter to Montana's Oscar Hersford, Patton wrote that Harold Ridenour, Fred Stover, and the editors of Facts for Farmers made him "feel like the man who said, 'I would not mind being swallowed by a whale, but I'll be damned if I intend to be irritated to death by tadpoles.'" (James G. Patton to Oscar Hersford, March 28, 1952, Box 10, Folder 5, Talbott Family Papers.)

end of its fiscal year in 1953 the dues paid membership of any chartered State Union, regardless of the date of its charter, shall be less than 3,500 or at the end of its fiscal year in 1955 or of any year thereafter shall be less than 5,000.³³

The amendment placed in jeopardy the charters of five organizations: Oregon (paid membership of 3,407), Michigan (2,919), Texas (2,634), Iowa (2,296), and the Eastern Division (3,213).³⁴ But, as was evident from both pre-convention planning and subsequent actions, the change was aimed exclusively at Iowa and the Eastern Division.

In the weeks leading up to the convention, C.E. Huff and others laboriously drafted and re-drafted a rationale for the constitutional change that focused specifically on Iowa and the Eastern Division. At one point in the pre-convention planning, which with its reference to "provid[ing] the opposition with ammunition" took on the aura of an all-out battle plan, Huff and M.W. Thatcher toyed with the idea of naming names and of directly censuring Fred Stover. In the end, what was decided upon was an Executive Committee "Statement and Recommendation" which, although it refrained from citing specific individuals, clearly was directed at the two

³³-The Proposed Amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws of the National Farmers Union; An Analysis of Their Meaning and Effect," Series V, Box 4, Bk 1 (Exhibit File: NFU Convention, 1952 Biennial Convention, Dallas Texas, March 10-14), National Farmers Union Papers.

³⁴"Delegates Certified to Golden Jubilee 1952 National Convention," Series V, Box 4, File Folder #1 (Minutes and Proceedings - Convention, 1952), National Farmers Union Papers.

organizational affiliates who most vocally opposed the Farmers Union's recent conversion to President Truman's foreign policy.³⁵

The statement "upheld the right of the individual to his views and of a minority to be heard and to have its views considered." But, it continued, "Liberty is not license and the improper and dangerous actions and methods of a relatively small minority within the organization may no longer be ignored." Specifically, the statement claimed, a "small group" of Farmers Union members had participated in a series of "wrongful and dangerous acts." They had adopted the pattern of dictators by attempting "to control, divide, confuse, [and] conquer;" they had distributed publications, "financed by unknown sources," that were "deliberately misleading as to facts;" they had held "their own state boundaries to be inviolable and [had cried] out against any contact by National Farmers Union with members and ex-members who disagree with them within their own states," and they had used educational funds "in violation of the rights of . . . other states and of National Farmers Union."³⁶ In concise form, the Executive Committee's statement reviewed the charges that had been levelled against Iowa ever

³⁵Handwritten and typed drafts and redrafts and related correspondence in Box 9, Folder 44, Talbott Family Papers.

³⁶"Statement and Recommendation," February, 1952, Box 9, Folder 44, Talbott Family Papers.

since the start of the Korean War.

It is unclear from the record whether the Executive Committee's statement was ever presented to the convention or whether it was merely in place as a potential backup should the need arise. The organizational structure of the convention, in which plural voting allowed Glenn Talbott's North Dakota delegation, with the support of one or two other states, to dominate decisions, precluded the possibility of meaningful discussion of the issues. Knowing that they could attain their objective even without debate, the Talbott-Patton forces sat mutely, but confidently, by as the constitutional change calling for a minimum membership of 3,500 by the end of 1953 was introduced.

Michigan's Simeon Martin, whose state organization's existence was threatened by the amendment, was the first of many speakers opposing the change. His reminder of the difficulties involved in organizing in a section of the nation "sewed up tight with the reactionary Farm Bureau" was followed by Fred Stover's reiteration of the same point and by the Iowa farm leader's alarmed observation that the constitutional change represented a denunciation of "the very things we stand for." Eastern Division executive secretary Louis Slocum followed with the claim that it made no sense to "adopt a proposal that will not make you bigger and not more powerful."

After further comments from Stover, a Washington state delegate argued that he would be unable to face the membership in his state if the amendment passed, and Oklahoma's Roscoe Beale, asking that unnecessary hardships not be placed on the smaller states, pleaded for rejection of the amendment.

Prior to the vote, not one delegate spoke in support of the proposed change. Yet when it came time to vote, the measure passed overwhelmingly. The threatened affiliates in Oregon, Michigan, Iowa, and the Eastern Division were joined in opposition to the amendment by Minnesota and by dissenting individuals in Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. Their combined vote, however, was overpowered by individual votes in Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, and by the unanimous votes from Arkansas, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, the Rocky Mountain Division, and, surprisingly, the threatened state of Texas. Only after the balloting did a Dakota delegate speak in favor of the action, naively expressing the view that, although the measure had passed, no affiliate would actually face charter revocation. Iowa's Merle Hansen, a close friend of Fred Stover, offered a more realistic assessment when he described the convention action as being driven by "the substance of hysteria" and predicted that the delegates had just authored "the articles of suicide" for the National

Farmers Union.³⁷

The lack of verbal defense of their actions by the Patton-Talbott contingent gave the convention an air of conspiratorial pre-planning. In addition to the extensive pre-convention work on the Executive Committee's "Statement and Recommendation," the national leadership arrived in Dallas with a "file of letters" from Iowa's pro-Hoffman forces that they suspected would be "extremely helpful" in obtaining converts. It was, however, a matter of overpreparation. Holding the necessary votes to defeat any effort at dissent and manning the key positions in the parliamentary regulation of the proceedings, Patton's supporters merely had to show up, cast their votes, and quietly listen to, or even ignore, the futile objections of their opponents. When constitutional amendments radically altering the workings of the Union and tightening the controlling grip of the national leadership were introduced, they were passed in the same fashion as the change in membership requirements - without one word being offered in support. When Marie Holte, who had introduced a peace resolution at the November, 1951, North Dakota Farmers Union convention, was nominated for national vice president, she was resoundingly defeated by Herb Rolph, the incumbent

³⁷Transcript of convention debate, pp. 164-191, Series V, Box 4, Bk 2 (Master Proceedings File), National Farmers Union Papers.

who, after listening to Holte's ten-minute election address, declined the invitation to speak in favor of his own candidacy. And when Simeon Martin introduced a resolution renouncing colonialism and calling for the withdrawal of U.S. armed forces "from foreign soil," resolution committee members listened "in silence," gave it scant consideration, and then voted down a proposal to present it to the convention for discussion.³⁸

Despite the Dallas Morning News' banner headline announcing "Farmers Union Defeats Issue on Cease-Fire," there was no "bitter floor fight" over the Korean War. Following the resolution committee's model in dealing with Simeon Martin's peace resolution, the carefully orchestrated convention muzzled the efforts by Fred Stover's supporters to initiate debate on American foreign policy. A "Statement of Principles" circulated by a Rank and File Committee co-chaired by Marie Holte and whose executive committee included Nebraska's Merle Hansen and Montana's Harold Ridenour, objected to the endorsement by "some Farmers Union leaders . . . of the gigantic . . . war mobilization program" Those leaders, the Statement's authors argued, had "capitulated to the fantastic and fatal delusion that

³⁸Glenn J. Talbott to James G. Patton, February 26, 1952, Box 10, Folder 3, Talbott Family Papers; Transcript of convention debate, pp. 70-71 and 164-191, Series V, Box 4, Bk 2 (Master Proceedings File), National Farmers Union Papers; Iowa Union Farmer, November, 1951, p. 2 and April, 1952, p. 4.

farm prosperity can be attained through a gigantic warspending program" and had accepted "the fiction that the present foreign policy is the road to peace and prosperity." Dismissing Russian imperialism from the program committee's list of "major threats to true world brotherhood and peace," the Rank and File Committee asked the convention instead to recognize but one significant danger: "the existence in the world of uncorrected and indefensible evils," including "starvation, exploitation, feudalism, and dictatorships," of which the "so-called Korean police action" was but one example. The Committee also pushed for recognition of an American agenda that rejected as an instrument of foreign policy the "threat of political and economic penetration." These strongly worded denunciations of U.S. policy, which at previous Farmers Union conventions had echoed through every address, were heard in 1952 only in hallways and hotel rooms. Besides Marie Holte's references to "farm boys . . . in some far off place shooting people and being shot for something they know not what," the only podium-delivered commentary that even remotely suggested criticism of American policy was the observation of Scotland's Lord Boyd Orr, the former head of the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization, that there was "a mass uprising against imperialism of the white man in the Far East."³⁹

³⁹Dallas Morning News, March 15, 1952, part 1, p. 1 and March 11, 1952, part 1, p. 3; Farmers Union National Rank and File Committee, "Statement of Principles" and "To All Delegates and Members," Series V, Box

Instead, as Facts for Farmers reported, the "top officers" of the Farmers Union struck "a heavy pro-Truman note" at Dallas. Jim Patton, in a complete about-face from his earlier criticisms of American unilateralism, argued that events in Korea left the United States "no choice but to maintain a protective shield of military strength to protect free nations against possible military aggression by would-be totalitarian world rulers." Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan, invited by Patton to address the convention, spoke in similar terms. The United States, he said, was "willing to spend billions on defense - because we clearly must," and, he concluded, "We cannot afford to allow a billion people to fall under the domination of the Kremlin if aid from us will prevent it." Perhaps the most appropriate individual missing from this celebration of American strength was President Truman himself who, although invited by Patton, could not attend. He did, nevertheless, send his regrets in which he praised the "forward-looking policies" of the Farmers Union and spoke of his certainty that the organization would "continue to support a strong, forward-looking foreign

4, File Folder 1 (Minutes and Proceedings, Convention 1952), National Farmers Union Papers; "Program Committee Policy Statement," Series V, Box 4, Bk 1 (Exhibit File: NFU Convention, 1952 Biennial Convention, Dallas, Texas, March 10-14), National Farmers Union Papers; Transcript of convention debate, pp. 70-71, Series V, Box 4, Bk 2 (Master Proceedings File), National Farmers Union Papers.

policy."⁴⁰

How long into the future the Farmers Union would pursue its new-found support for Truman's policies could not easily be predicted in 1952. What was obvious, however, was that in addition to accepting a more aggressive and active American role in world affairs, the Farmers Union at Dallas also compromised a number of the other views that for years had defined the organization. Policy statements calling for the "encouragement of private enterprise," opposing "governmental agricultural collectives," and cautiously avoiding both a condemnation of Farm Bureau proposals to move poorer farmers off the land and a recommendation for an accelerated price support program for agriculture represented, as the Rank and File Committee observed, "a complete violation of the traditions of the National Farmers Union. Never before," the Committee argued, "has the National Farmers Union identified itself with exploiting business interests, placed limitations on the cooperative movement, [or] advocated a program of scarcity"⁴¹

⁴⁰Facts for Farmers, April, 1952, p. 1; Dallas Morning News, March 13, 1952, part 3, p. 11; "Report of James G. Patton, President, National Farmers Union, 1952 Convention, Dallas, Texas, March 10, 1952," and Harry Truman to James Patton, March 8, 1952, Box 17, Folder "National Farmers Union, Dallas Conference 3/52," Waters Papers.

⁴¹"Program Committee Policy Statement," Series V, Box 4, Bk 1 (Exhibit File: NFU Convention, 1952 Biennial Convention, Dallas, Texas, March 10-14), National Farmers Union Papers; Farmers Union National Rank

In addressing the convention, M.W. Thatcher spoke derisively and accurately of "the mirage of prosperity which [had] made this cold war against American farmers possible" ⁴² But despite this nostalgic allusion to the spirit of agrarian protest, it was clear that, with the Dallas convention in 1952, the National Farmers Union had changed. Not only had it publicly relinquished its role as foreign policy critic, but it had also abandoned the premise that American unilateralism damaged the domestic welfare of the nation's farmers. Discarding their old articles of faith, the national leadership of the Farmers Union adopted new policy positions that supported American strength abroad, minimized direct government assistance to farmers, and, reflecting the insecure temper of the times, allowed no room for organizational dissent.

In the wake of the convention, Jim Patton remarked that opponents of the organization's new direction had put on a "very shady and shabby performance" at Dallas. ⁴³ The truth, however, was that the national president and his backers were the ones guilty of underhanded tactics, and File Committee, "To All Delegates and Members," Series V, Box 4, File Folder 1 (Minutes and Proceedings, Convention 1952), National Farmers Union Papers;

⁴²Dallas Morning News, March 14, 1952, part 1, p. 11.

⁴³James G. Patton to Aubrey Williams, April 20, 1952, Box 7, File Folder 16, Patton Papers.

particularly in their drive for constitutional restructuring to purge Fred Stover and other "heretics" from the Farmers Union. As the new 3,500 minimum membership requirement took effect in 1953, it became pathetically obvious that the restructuring had been instituted for no other reason than to fashion an organization untainted by the presence of Cold War critics.

The controversy generated by the Farmers Union's public brawl hurt the membership drives in each of the five states that was a potential victim of charter revocation. Perhaps because the quarrel had taken place in its own backyard, the Texas affiliate was the most severely damaged; by 1953 its membership had dropped fifty-nine percent, from 2,634 to 1,069. Iowa, because of its position at the center of the controversy and because anti-Stover forces urged members to boycott the affiliate, suffered a forty-three percent decline, falling from 2,296 to 1,311. Michigan, the Eastern division, and Oregon experienced, respectively, membership drops of thirty-two (2,919 to 1,980), twenty-eight (3,213 to 2,329), and twenty (3,407 to 2,711) percent.⁴⁴ Despite the deterioration in membership, each of the

⁴⁴A Report of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America to the Full Board Regarding the Future Status of Those State Organizations of the Farmers Union Which Had Failed to Reach a Membership of 3500 by the End of the 1953 Fiscal Year," Series XIV, Box 2, File Folder 1, National Farmers Union Papers.

five still had the 1,000 minimum originally prescribed by the Farmers Union constitution. It was only the Dallas revision that made each of them a potential victim.

When the national Board of Directors met in Denver on March 13, 1954, it was presented with an Executive Committee report detailing the membership situations in each of the five affiliates and containing a recommendation for action regarding possible charter revocation. The report was a remarkable document, not only because of its obvious bias against Iowa and the Eastern Division, but also because in forwarding its recommendations the Executive Committee offered a series of rationales that said much about the true interests of the Union.

The report dealt first with Texas, the state that not only had lost the greatest percentage of members between 1952 and 1953, but which also now had the lowest membership total of any of the organization's fifteen affiliates. Texas, however, the Executive Committee reminded the Board of Directors, was "the original home of the Farmers Union" and was directed by officers who were "capable, conscientious and hard working." In addition, the Texas affiliate had in place a Farmers Union insurance program that was "soundly developing and expanding." For these reasons, the Executive Committee recommended that "the charter status of the state organization

remain undisturbed."⁴⁵

The same recommendation was made for Oregon, and for at least one reason that it shared with Texas. While the official state membership was 2,711, the number of people in Oregon who were Farmers Union automobile insurance policy holders, but not necessarily Farmers Union members, exceeded 3,000. The newly elected state president, a Mr. Libby, had promised to carefully develop this potential membership pool, and so the Executive Committee judged it "a real possibility" that the "activities and energies" of Oregon could be "properly marshalled and guided."⁴⁶

The Executive Committee similarly recommended that Michigan retain its charter, although its reasons for doing so were more obscure than in the cases of Texas and Oregon. Vague references to the successful overcoming of "existing obstacles," the recent improvement of the "public attitude toward [the] Farmers Union," and "several organizational changes" that had "already borne considerable fruit," produced the conclusion that there were "few, if any [negative factors] with respect to our future in this state."⁴⁷

The aura of optimism ended, but the obscurantist approach evident in the

⁴⁵"A Report of the Executive Committee," pp. 1-2.

⁴⁶"A Report of the Executive Committee," p. 2.

⁴⁷"A Report of the Executive Committee," p. 2.

Michigan rationale continued, when the Executive Committee report turned to the Eastern Division. Dredging up a rationale for charter revocation that, to this point in time, had not seen the light of day, the report described "a material dissimilarity" in the population make-up of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the two states comprising the Eastern Division, and argued that it perhaps had been a mistake originally to have combined the two into one unit. Since "conscientious officers have failed to achieve a coordinated effort" between the two states, and since farmers in Pennsylvania had declined, "for reasons of their own . . . to join or participate as long as the present charter situation prevails," the Executive Committee report suggested "the revocation of the charter of [the] Eastern Division" and the pursuit of an "independent charter status" for Pennsylvania. "Further study and discussion" would be necessary "before entering upon an aggressive membership campaign in New Jersey" ⁴⁸ The recommendation deliberately avoided any discussion of the differences of opinion between the state and national leaderships over U.S. foreign policy. It also failed to mention that Alvin Christman and Louis Slocum, the two vocal critics of American foreign policy who headed the Eastern division, managed the affiliate from their home base in New Jersey.

⁴⁸"A Report of the Executive Committee," pp. 2-3.

The Executive Committee's recommendation for Iowa called for the revocation of that state's charter as well. The report praised the strength of the affiliate in "the early history of [the] National Farmers Union," but noted that, much like the case in Pennsylvania, farmers in Iowa "for whatever reasons they may have . . . will not join [the] Farmers Union in that state as it is presently constituted." The "continuing deterioration in the effectiveness" of the state organization stood in stark contrast, the report read, to the "abundant evidence that a new and fresh organizational start in Iowa would receive wide and effective farmer support."⁴⁹ Like the analysis of the Eastern Division, the Executive Committee's recommendation for Iowa made no reference to foreign policy differences, presenting the case for charter revocation instead under the fabricated claim of organizational ineffectiveness.

Not surprisingly, the Board of Directors adopted the recommendations of the Executive Committee, and the charters of Iowa and the Eastern Division were revoked that March 13th. Tellingly, three days before the final decision was made, Fred Stover was summoned to Chicago to meet with Farmers Union organizer Gus Geisler and with Charles Brannan, the former Secretary of Agriculture who, with the end of the Truman administration, had accepted an advisory position with the National Farmers Union. The

⁴⁹"A Report of the Executive Committee," p. 3.

purpose of the meeting, as later reported by Stover, was to give the Iowa leader one last chance to save the state's charter by agreeing to step down as president. By doing so, and by allowing the national organization to hand-pick as new state leader "someone who never had any connections or associations with the Iowa Farmers Union," Stover conceivably could save embarrassment for himself personally, for his state membership, and for the Farmers Union as a whole.⁵⁰

Stover declined the offer and instead issued a "fact sheet" summarizing the events leading up to the charter revocation. He also joined with Alvin Christman in publishing a March 16, 1954, statement describing the Farmers Union action as "a shortsighted decision" that would "comfort only our enemies." Unlike the national leadership, which followed Patton's lead in remaining either tight-lipped or purposely vague about the decision, Stover, Christman, and Iowa member Lee Harthan developed thorough summaries that questioned the wisdom of reducing the organization's membership at a time when "join[ing] together for mutual protection" seemed to be the more logical goal. It was, Harthan urged Patton in a March 10th letter, a time "to heal all the sores that exist in the Union."⁵¹

⁵⁰"Fact Sheet: Statement by the Iowa Farmers Union," Stover Papers.

⁵¹"Fact Sheet," Stover Papers; "Statement of Iowa Farmers Union and Eastern Division of the National Farmers Union," March 16, 1954, Stover

The time for healing, however, had passed, at least in the mind of Jim Patton. As the curtain came down on the Korean War, the event that had sparked the organization's public dispute in 1950, the president of the National Farmers Union could take comfort in the fact that his effort to purge the Union of Cold War critics had at last succeeded. What he could not rest comfortably with was the reality that his efforts had made casualties not only of the dissenters but also of the Farmers Union itself. Certainly he had cleansed the organization of its most vocal Cold War critics, but in doing so he had created widespread organizational disruption. Coupled with the abandonment of principle evident in his about-face on American unilateralism, Patton's misguided efforts diminished for the immediate future the effectiveness of the National Farmers Union as a voice in the formulation of American foreign policy.

Papers; Lee Harthan to James G. Patton, March 10, 1954, Series XIV, Box 2, File Folder 1, National Farmers Union Papers.

Conclusion Cold War Casualties

In a 1993 commentary on Melvyn Leffler's A Preponderance of Power, Bruce Cumings reminded his colleague that, the writings of the historical profession to the contrary, there was significant domestic opposition to America's early Cold War foreign policy. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, N.A.T.O., and the decision to go to war in Korea, Cumings wrote, faced considerable resistance from a vast number of sources, including "remnant isolationism, a restive right wing, strong and recalcitrant labor, [and] Republicans out of power for a generation. . . ." Although his list did not specifically include America's farmers, it did cite as a generic category groups adopting "conflicting strategies for dealing with communism at home and abroad."¹

The National Farmers Union was one such group. Between 1945 and 1950, the organization embraced a contentious foreign policy strategy that rejected what Albert Einstein called America's "Great Illusion," the belief that because of its post-World War II position of unparalleled strength, its

¹Bruce Cumings, "Revising Postrevisionism," or, The Poverty of Theory in Diplomatic History," Diplomatic History XVII (Fall, 1993), pp. 563-566.

"preponderance of power," the United States could impose its will upon the world. Arguing that the struggle pitting democracy versus communism was an oversimplification that minimized the more important issues of worldwide poverty and national self-determination, the leadership of the Farmers Union charged both the United States and the Soviet Union with bearing partial responsibility for the beginnings of the Cold War. Able to directly influence only the American side of the equation, Jim Patton's organization challenged the Truman administration to alter its course and to resurrect the spirit of international cooperation that it associated with the memory of Franklin Roosevelt.

Tragically, 1945 to 1950 were not opportune years for critics of American policies. Administration officials bluntly labelled the Soviet Union as this nation's number one enemy and just as forthrightly called on the American people to support the Cold War as a way of life. Individuals and groups who challenged this agenda were rewarded with public ridicule, often at the hands of what Stanley Kutler has appropriately described as an "American Inquisition" practicing "official repression on an unprecedented scale."² For the Farmers Union, this translated into perpetual scrutiny of

²Stanley I. Kutler, The American Inquisition: Justice and Injustice in the Cold War (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. xii.

its loyalty by the F.B.I., the State Department, the House Un-American Activities Committee, and the American Legion. Eager to adopt the politics of fear generated by Joseph McCarthy and other apostles of conformity, rival farm organizations joined the attack, hoping to increase their political leverage at the expense of the Farmers Union.

From 1950 to 1953, U.S. involvement in Korea simultaneously increased both the Farmers Union's displeasure with American foreign policy and the public's disapproval of the organization's stand. For many in the Union, the war particularly highlighted the intimate relationship between government policies abroad and those at home, for the three years of fighting produced a series of negative consequences for American agriculture that principally impacted on small family farmers. Farmers Union complaints about these effects, which included cuts in agricultural programs such as the Brannan Plan, the siphoning off of farm labor to both the draft and to war-related industries, and the importation of often unskilled foreign labor to replenish the labor pool, added to the organization's claim that American foreign policy, in addition to unnecessarily supporting repressive, undemocratic regimes, contributed as well to an increased polarization of American agriculture. The complaints also added fuel to the charge, now most vocally expressed by Senator Styles Bridges, that the Farmers Union was anti-

American and a threat to the safety and security of the nation.

Confronting this seemingly constant criticism, the leaders of the Farmers Union faced two choices: either remain steadfast in their views and continue to experience public disgrace, or abandon their criticisms of American foreign policy and acquiesce in the spirit and message of the times. In an age when, as President Truman himself once remarked, "the Cold War began to overshadow our lives," these choices were common, particularly so for groups and individuals who aspired to an intelligent and informed discussion of the issues facing the American people. As commonplace as they were, however, the choices were not easy and, as the leadership of the Farmers Union discovered in the years following Korea, neither choice either guaranteed relief from public scrutiny or, in the case of those who shifted with the times, secured a continued role in the discussion and formulation of American policy.

For Fred Stover, as well as for Archie Wright and others who had vocally spearheaded Farmers Union opposition to President Truman's policies, the choice was far less difficult than for others who, under the pressure of conformity, had waffled in their views. Asked by Peace Reporter editor John Darr in August, 1953, to comment "on the meaning of the Korean truce," Stover replied that the end of the war offered the opportunity for "a return

to the one world concepts of Roosevelt and Willkie, . . . for uniting the world for peace instead of dividing it for war." His assessment of Korea was a clear indication of Stover's choice to stick closely to his view, expressed consistently in the early years of the Cold War, that international cooperation was the only route to world peace and that Harry Truman's heralding of American unilateralism and his drive for conformity, as he told Darr, made it difficult "to avoid other Koreans."³

Stover's disavowal of Harry Truman's foreign policy led not only to his Iowa affiliate's expulsion from the National Farmers Union, but to other charges and investigations that in the aftermath of Korea further branded the Iowa farmer as a dangerous radical. In a February 21, 1954, radio broadcast entitled "Last Man Out," a mysterious woman named Helen Wood Birnie claimed that she had once attended a Communist Party steering committee meeting with Stover, and that she knew for a fact that he was a member of the Communist Party. Although Stover denied the allegations as "utterly and entirely false," the F.B.I. used the charges to pursue its own investigation of Stover and the Iowa Farmers Union.⁴

³John W. Darr, Jr. to Fred Stover, August 1, 1953, and Fred Stover to John W. Darr, Jr., August 10, 1953, both in the Stover Papers.

⁴Report of F.W. Stover to 38th State Convention of Iowa Farmers Union," September 17, 1954, pp. 5-6, Box 6, Folder "Convention Reports, 1947-1976," U.S. Farmers Association Records; Undated press release from

In a series of 1956 reports, the F.B.I. claimed that the Iowa organization was "dominated or controlled by the Communist Party, USA," and that it had sought "implementation of the CP line." The reasons the F.B.I. cited for its conclusions included a litany of charges that Stover's critics had used for years: his involvement with the Progressive Party, his opposition to the Korean War, his support for worldwide nuclear disarmament, his supposed refusal to directly criticize the Soviet Union, and, more recently, his organization's call for the repeal of anti-communist legislation and for the enforcement of anti-segregation, anti-poll tax, and anti-lynching laws. Stover's optimistic 1955 report that "the settlement of the Indo-China War, the avoidance of war with China, the Bandoeng Conference, the Geneva Conference," and a host of other positive events had "helped to improve the political climate over the world" was also cited as proof of his organization's Communist ties. So, too, was a 1952 Christmas card sent by Iowa Farmers Union member George Wharam to then President-elect Dwight Eisenhower. "Dear President-elect Eisenhower," the card began. "I sincerely hope you will bring an end to the shooting and killing in Korea by Christmas. Then the whole world can say: 'And on earth peace, good will toward

F.W. Stover "To All the United States Senators and Congressmen from Iowa," Stover Papers.

men."⁵

What is intriguing about the F.B.I. investigation, in addition to the uniformly weak and, in some cases, truly absurd, nature of its evidence, was its estimate of precisely when Stover and the Iowa Farmers Union began "promoting the objectives of the Communist Party, USA." The agency's August 18, 1956, report cited as the starting point for Iowa's subversion September 23, 1950, the final day of the Iowa Farmers Union's annual convention at which Jim Patton had announced his total "disagreement with Fred Stover's present position on international policy" and Leonard Hoffman and his Hardin County supporters had initiated the move to dump Stover for his "slavish following of the Moscow line." The timing of the F.B.I. report, which included as fact the never proven Hardin County charges that Stover deliberately denied charters to locals opposed to his positions, raises interesting questions about the informants used by the F.B.I. in reaching its conclusions. Whatever its sources and despite the weakness of its case, the F.B.I. investigation, along with Helen Birnie's radio broadcast and the National Farmers Union's campaign to cleanse the organization of its dissident elements, were, with their tactics of lies, innuendoes, and half-

⁵F.B.I. reports of January 24, 1956 (pp. 7-9), August 18, 1956 (pp. 15-16, 44, and 50), and October 1, 1956 (pp. 7-10), Box 48, Folder 1 ("F.B.I. Records re: IFU"), Iowa Farmers Union Records.

truths, typical of the times. The case against Fred Stover and other Farmers Union members who chose to remain steadfast in their criticisms of U.S. foreign policy never made the "American Inquisition" headlines earned by such figures as Owen Lattimore, Ezra Pound, and Harry Bridges, but their persecution was no less typical of an age dominated by the politics of fear.⁶

Banished from the Farmers Union in 1954, Stover and his Iowa supporters established in 1957 what eventually came to be known as the U.S. Farmers Association.⁷ The motto of the new organization, "Peace and Parity," reflected Stover's long-held view that the nation's foreign policy went hand-in-hand with its domestic program, and that equity for farmers at home was the by-product of a well thought out and equally equitable policy abroad. It was not something, Stover charged, that could be accomplished by promoting American unilateralism or by "parroting the old phrases about the 'American way of life' or 'rolling back the tide of imperialistic world communism.'"⁸ Believing it essential to reverse American policies, Stover

⁶F.B.I. report, August 18, 1956, pp. 15-16, Iowa Farmers Union Records. These reports, which I accidentally, but fortuitously, came across at Iowa State University, include the blackouts typical of F.B.I. reports, thereby obliterating the names of the approximately five informants.

⁷The new organization was known as the U.S. Farm Union and as the Iowa Farmers Association before settling on U.S. Farmers Association.

⁸"Report of F.W. Stover to 38th State Convention of Iowa Farmers Union," September 17, 1954, p. 9.

spent the last forty years of his life, much of it under the watchful eye of the F.B.I.,⁹ working for peace abroad and for economic parity at home. Branded a subversive, he died in 1990, a casualty of Cold War paranoia who nevertheless insisted, as he had told John Darr in 1953, that "peace workers in America still have a lot of work to do."¹⁰

While Fred Stover's life in the aftermath of Korea showed what happened to individuals who continued their dissent from American foreign policy, Jim Patton's tale signified a more complex, but equally discouraging, aspect of Cold War conformity. Unlike Stover, who chose to persist in his role of administration critic, Patton opted to acquiesce in the mentality of the age. Having in 1946 accused the United States of "imperialist adventures backed to the hilt by American diplomacy and American arms," Patton in 1953 told the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association in St. Paul, in an echoing of Henry Luce's call for an "American Century," that "this is the United States' day in civilization's time." A year later, in addressing a conference sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Patton spoke of the nation's responsibility to build "integrated free world military and economic strength." The same man who earlier in his career had lambasted Farm

⁹Tom Knudson, "Seeking Communist Ties, FBI Trailed Farm Leader Stover," Des Moines Register, August 7, 1983, p. 1B.

¹⁰Fred Stover to John W. Darr, Jr., August 10, 1953.

Bureau head Allan Kline for his support of an "unholy alliance" between business and government, now marched in near lock-step with Kline in a joint advocacy of free enterprise at home and American military might abroad.¹¹ In doing so, Patton lost sight of the tenets that had steered organizational policy since at least the end of World War II: that domestic and foreign policies were irrevocably linked, and that American unilateralism and a narrow-minded focus on national security limited the prospects for international cooperation and world peace.

Jim Patton's conversion to the mentality of the Cold War was a result of what his biographer, Charles Livermore, accurately labelled as Patton's "power-conscious" nature. But Livermore was wrong when he argued that the "less naive" Patton, the one eager to cooperate with President Truman, emerged with the 1948 presidential election. Instead, it was the events leading up to and into the Korean War, particularly the image of American boys dying once again on foreign soil, that produced Patton's about-face on America's role in world affairs. Privy, in all likelihood, to the re-evaluation of U.S. foreign policy that produced NSC-68, and recognizing on the horizon the changes in American society that document would produce, Jim Patton

¹¹ Arkansas Union Farmer, January, 1953, p. 8; "Report of F.W. Stover to 38th State Convention of Iowa Farmers Union," September 17, 1954, pp. 9-10.

sought to preserve both his own personal and his organization's role in the making of U.S. policy. To do so, in the temper of the times, demanded a cleansing of the Farmers Union of those elements that served as an embarrassing reminder of the organization's outspoken criticism of American policy in the earliest years of the Cold War. And so Jim Patton, assisted by Glenn Talbott and others of like mind, staged their own "inquisition." Adopting the tactics of repression, they successfully purged from the Union a host of outspoken critics, including Alvin Christman, Louis Slocum, Archie Wright, and, of course, Fred Stover.

In the years between the Korean War and his death in 1985, Jim Patton insisted, on the very rare occasions when he spoke about it, that Farmers Union actions against Fred Stover had nothing to do with differences of opinion over Korea in particular or over American foreign policy in general. Instead, Patton claimed, the fight against Stover had been necessary because of the Iowa leader's inability to build membership in his state. This argument presented Stover not as a subversive, nor as a Communist, but as a "total non-conformist" who was so "cantankerous" and "goddamn crazy" that he had to be removed for the sake of organizational unity. Although Farmers Union officials defend the argument to this day, the facts speak otherwise. Fred Stover was not removed from the Farmers Union for membership

deficiencies, but because his challenge to President Truman's foreign policies represented a threat to the continued existence of the Union, the preservation of which, for Jim Patton, overrode all other concerns.¹²

It is ironic that despite his maneuvering for political position, Jim Patton failed to attain his goals. Having abandoned the traditions and policies of the Farmers Union in order to preserve its role in Cold War America, Patton witnessed instead, in the years after Korea, a declining status both for himself personally and for the organization as a whole. Impeded in part by the return of the Republicans who had been "out of power for a generation," and in particular by a less than satisfactory relationship with Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson, the Farmers Union fell further out of favor with the powers in Washington than it had ever been

¹²Charles Livermore, Columbia Oral History interview with Jim Patton, August, 1978, pp. 93-96, Box 1, Patton Papers. Farmers Union officials who maintain the "deteriorating membership" argument include: South Dakota's Kenny Schuman (phone conversation with author, November 11, 1991), Milt Hakel (interview with author, National Farmers Union Office, Washington, D.C., August 20, 1992), and Dave Carter (interview with author, National Farmers Union Office, Denver, Colorado, October 11, 1991). The interview with Livermore is one of the rare places where Patton referred either to Stover or the issue of the Korean War. In a 289-page Columbia Oral History interview conducted by Ed Edwin in September, 1979, there is no mention at all of Stover and only passing references to Korea (Box 1, Patton Papers). A 61-page transcript of a 1981 interview with "Betty," a copy of which this author obtained from Milt Hakel, has no references to either subject. Much like his habit of cleansing his organizational records, it appears that Patton had certain topics about which he would not often go on record.

during the Truman administration. After peaking in the 1950's, membership plunged through the next three decades and stood, as of its 1994 annual convention in Fargo, North Dakota, at less than half of its Korean War era totals. Writing of that convention, the Associated Press noted the "painfully obvious" aging of the membership and posed the telling question, "Has [the] National Farmers Union lost its clout?"¹³

In truth, whatever clout the Farmers Union once held was lost in the 1950's when the organization, pressured to conform to America's Cold War agenda, split in two over the issue of U.S. foreign policy. The Fred Stover forces who continued criticizing the Truman administration fell victim to the politics of fear, were ostracized as heretics and subversives, and so joined the ranks of the Cold War casualties destroyed by an "American Inquisition" that demanded more conformity than they were willing to accept. The other group, those who believed that by choosing the path of least resistance and going along with the American agenda they could somehow retain a position of importance, fared no better. Unable to overcome the constant smears directed at the Union between 1945 and 1950, and further inhibited by a change of presidential administrations in

¹³"Has National Farmers Union lost its clout?," DeKalb Daily Chronicle, March 8, 1994, p. 7.

the closing years of the Korean War, the Jim Patton-led forces watched helplessly as their influence slipped away and as they, too, became casualties of the Cold War.

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